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Albert Camus's Reconstruction of Symbolic Reality: Exile, Judgment, and Kingdom.

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ALBERT CAMUS'S RECONSTRUCTION OF SYMBOLIC REALITY: EXILE, JUDGMENT, AND KINGDOM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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in

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by
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Abstract

Throughout his life, Albert Camus was deeply concerned with problems of language and representation. Often mislabeled an existentialist or philosopher of the absurd, his skepticism of modern rationality has been well recorded. Yet despite considerable scholarly attention, a satisfactory understanding of Camus's thoughts on language has not been achieved. This essay is an effort to rectify the situation by carefully exploring Camus's use and understanding of symbols.

By first gleaning a theory of symbolization from the philosophical works of Ernst Cassirer, Eric Voegelin, and Paul Ricoeur, and then comparing it to Camus's writings on myth, symbols, and narrative, it is possible to establish that Camus was a writer self-consciously engaged in symbolic reality for explicit philosophic and political purposes. Subsequently, by carefully examining Camus's alterations of specific symbols--exile, rebellion, and kingdom--within his narratives, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of his moral and political thought. In short, exposing the role of symbols and narratives within Camus's work not only makes him relevant to contemporary political theory, it also alters the traditional interpretation of his political thought.

If a label had to be given to my ambition,
I should speak rather of the symbol.
Albert Camus, *Notebooks: 1942-1951*

Chapter One
Camus's Return to Symbols and Politics

Shaped by the Occupation

Nearly forty years after his premature death, Albert Camus is reemerging as one of the prominent figures of the twentieth century. His writings are once again receiving considerable attention from scholars and the public. Camus's initial fame, and to some extent his prestige, is uniquely linked to the Nazi invasion of France. Indeed, the publication of his first major works, *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*, occurred during the Nazi occupation. Given such circumstances, Camus's exploration of the absurd in those works was both timely and appropriate.

A man of many talents--journalist, philosopher, playwright, and novelist--it was Camus's career as a journalist that proved to be most instrumental to the publication of *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Rejected from military service because of his tuberculosis and too radical to continue his journalist career in Algiers--censorship of criticisms against the French government was more severe in the colonies than in France itself--Camus moved to Paris in 1940. Acquiring a job at the leftist French newspaper the *Paris-Soir* through his friend and former colleague on the *Algier-Republicain*, Pascal Pia, Camus became acquainted with the Gallimards, the family of one of the most prominent publishing houses in France. This early association was short lived. When the Nazi's invaded Paris, Camus and the staff of *Paris-Soir* fled to Lyons. Distraught about the war as well as being isolated from the literary contacts he

had struggled to procure, Camus did not remain in France for more than a few months. When the news that the divorce with his first wife, Simone, came through, Camus made plans to return to Algeria and wed his fiancee, Catherine.

Caught in the maelstrom of the Second World War and exiled from the center of French publishing, Camus saw his manuscripts of *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus* take a circuitous route to publication. These circumstances affected the manner in which the works were presented. Camus desired all three absurd works, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Stranger*, and *Caligula*, to be published together. Unable to oversee the process, Camus relied on Pia. Upon receiving the manuscripts by mail, Pia forwarded them to Andre Malraux. Especially impressed with *The Stranger*, Malraux enthusiastically recommended it to Gaston Gallimard. Gallimard offered to publish *The Stranger* immediately, but required changes to *The Myth*. Specifically, the chapter on the Jewish Franz Kafka would have to be excluded. Even in their revised forms, the manuscripts had to be approved by the Germans. Being highly selective in choosing which member of the Propaganda-Staffel, the German censorship apparatus in Paris, to review the promising new author, Gallimard sent the works to Gerhard Heller. Receiving *The Stranger* in the afternoon, Heller read the work in one sitting. Heartily recommending the work, he offered to deal with any "difficulties." Thus, in June of 1942, Gallimard published *The Stranger*. Four months later, Gallimard released *The Myth of Sisyphus*. For a variety of ancillary reasons, *Caligula* was not published until 1944.

Bearing out Camus's suspicions, the publication of these works separately led to misinterpretations. Seen as a separate work from *The Myth of Sisyphus*, many criticized

The Stranger on moral grounds. Others, seeing the American influences--"Kafka written by Hemingway"--attacked the style of the work. Moreover, even astute readers, like Sartre, misinterpreted Camus's intentions in these works. Camus was not presenting the absurd as a solution but as a description of conditions. Regardless of the misunderstandings, paper shortages meant that Camus, no matter what kind of reviews and interpretations, would not be a best selling author during the war. Isolated in Algeria, it is unlikely that Camus realized the importance of landing his works with Gallimard. "In and around the house of Gallimard were the readers who made literary history. They were the French literary establishment."[1] Thus, as early as 1942, Camus made his mark with the literary elites in France.

Due to a particularly severe tubercular attack, Camus had been incapacitated during these negotiations over the publication of his works. Camus's doctor ordered convalescence in the mountains. Given his limited finances, Camus had only one choice. He moved to Francine's family summer retreat in La Panelier, a small hamlet near the Massif Central mountains. This turned out to be crucial. In November of 1942, the Allies landed in North Africa and Algeria was cut-off from France until liberation. Francine, who accompanied Camus to La Panelier, had returned to Oran just prior to the Allied invasion. Isolated from his family and homeland, Camus was trapped inside France.

Pia again came to Camus's assistance and obtained a position for him with Gallimard as a reader. Moving from La Panelier, to Lyons, and then to Paris, Camus

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[1]Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1979), p. 255.

was reintegrated into the literary community. It is through his continued contact with Pia and the Gallimard crowd that Camus became involved in the French Resistance in general and *Combat* in particular. In terms of his public renown in France, Camus's involvement in the French Resistance and *Combat* are the events that ensured his fame.

Originally designed to gather intelligence, commit sabotage, and engage the enemy with arms, *Combat* grew into an important underground newspaper during the Nazi occupation. Given the tight control of the Nazis, during the occupation no underground paper was able to do much more than bolster public spirit. Even such limited action was extremely dangerous, and Camus's involvement transformed him. He evolved from an interested observer to a committed resistance member. Several times he found hideouts for members of the armed resistance. The most notable such occasion was when he assisted Malraux in securing a hideout for Major George Hiller--the British officer responsible for the largest arms drop during the occupation of France. Such activities were rare, however, and Camus's most important activities involved secret negotiations with other clandestine groups. As the tide began to turn against the Germans, many began to focus on post-war France. Never monolithic, the political agendas of the various resistance groups began to surface. Vital to such agendas was the ability to reach a wide audience once the Nazis were defeated. To this end, Pia and Camus attempted to secure the equipment necessary to run a professional daily. Assuming a false identity, "Albert Mathe," Camus went to a variety of secret meetings where the clandestine groups divided up prospective resources. It was agreed

that *Combat* would get the large Rue Reaumur plant, and this proved critical to *Combat* emerging as one of the most important professional dailies in the post war period.[2]

Combat emerged as a powerful force in post-war France. Many French men and women approached liberation with a sense of hope but not of fulfillment. Freedom from the Nazis and their Vichy pawns marked a momentous military victory, but there was still a political struggle to be won. A return to the stale and ineffective politics prior to the war was a prevalent fear; but the trauma of occupation--the shared humiliation and sacrifice--gave rise to a rebellious and hopeful spirit in France. Camus commented: "To speak clearly, having only a faith in 1940, they have a politics, in the noble sense of the term, in 1944. Having started by resistance, they want to finish with revolution."[3]

Camus and the members of *Combat* strove to define and shape this revolution. It was this ambitious project, promoted by his passionate editorials, that first vaulted Camus into the public eye. Both he and *Combat* quickly came to represent the moral voice that had been so lacking in French political and social life prior to and during the war. Herbert Lottman attributes *Combat's* influence exclusively to this moral attitude.

> The moral bias of Camus's *Combat*, or more accurately the *Combat* of Camus, Pia, Altschuler, Paute-Gimone, Ollivier, and their colleagues, was the newspaper's single distinguishing feature, making concrete the vague and often unexpressed hopes of the younger generation. . . . It guaranteed that there would not be a moral vacuum during the scramble

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[2]For more details see Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, pp. 301-310.

[3]Herbert Lottman quoting Camus's radio address *Chant des Partisans*, which is preserved on a recording of the album entitled, "*Presence d'Albert Camus* (Ades).

> for power that was taking place the first few months of liberated Paris. Camus and *Combat* were a new morality or they were nothing.[4]

Camus did not amass real fame until he was awarded a Resistance Medal by the French government in 1946. Given not the standard medal but a Rosette, which denoted a higher honor and was considerably more rare, Camus was elevated to a unique status in France.[5] He came to represent France's conscience. One commentator remarked that Camus was "the most noble witness of a rather ignoble age."[6] This singular moral status served Camus well immediately after World War II--pushing his fiction to the forefront of French sensibilities. His first bestseller, *The Plague*, published in June of 1947, furthered Camus's moral status. Judging that the public would devour a work exploring their recent horrors without confronting them directly, Gallimard released 22,000 copies of *The Plague*. This proved to be a gross underestimate and within six months the novel had sold well over 100,000 copies.

Initially, Camus enjoyed his fame. In the spring of 1946, he took a trip to the United States and was treated like a celebrity. As the world increasingly became polarized between the Americans and the Russians, however, Camus was drawn into public debates. Slowly, as the intellectual and political climate began to change in France, Camus's moralism became an affliction.

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[4]Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, p. 335.

[5]Herbert Lottman notes that 4,345 Rosette medals were given compared to 43,902 regular Resistance Medals.

[6]Tony Judt quoting Pierre de Boisdeffre, "Camus *et son desin*," in *Camus* (Hatchette, 1962), from "The Lost World of Albert Camus," *The New York Review of Books*, October 6, 1994, p. 4.

The first signs of trouble came when Camus refused to join fellow leftists in France in ignoring the cruel excesses of the Soviet Union. One of the most notable public confrontations was with former rightist turned Gaullist, Baron d'Astier. Castigating Camus's moralism as tacit support for American-style capitalism, Baron d'Astier challenged Camus to send an open letter admonishing the United States for its complicity in the executions of prisoners by the right-wing Greek government. Contending that he had already spoken to the British about this issue, Camus "would hand d'Astier such a letter, nevertheless, if d'Astier for his part would protest the Soviet concentration camp system and forced labor practices."[7] D'Astier never responded. For Camus, no end, no matter how glorious, justified despotic and inhumane means and he persistently refused to accept human suffering today for the promise of salvation tomorrow.[8] But as the specter of the Cold War moved over Europe, intellectuals were prompted to choose sides. Camus's ambivalence aroused suspicion from his traditional allies, the French left.

His real break with the left came with the publication of his second major work of nonfiction, *The Rebel*. Published in its entirety in 1951, an early release of

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[7]Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, p. 449.

[8]Camus's moralism was a deeply held conviction. His long standing opposition to capital punishment, which was evident even during the war, is perhaps the best example. Herbert Lottman cites the case of Pierre Pucheu, the Vichy Minister of the Interior in Algeria who had assisted the Germans in the unjustified execution of hostages. Pucheu was an unsavory character who had few supporters when the Allies sentenced him to death. Camus wrote an unsigned article that, while not in defense of Pucheu, called into question the "justice of men in power" and warned of following in the footsteps of the Nazi's and killing in the name of abstraction. This article, published in the 1944 issue of *Lettres Francaises*, was known by insiders to be the work of Camus and his stance caused friction within the resistance crowd.

"Lautreamont and Banality," a chapter in *The Rebel* where Camus harshly treats the precursors of Surrealism, brought the ire of Andre Breton. Breton's response, a rather personal attack in print, drew Camus into public polemical debates, first with Breton himself, then with Francis Jeanson, and finally with Sartre.[9] These rather clumsy forays cost Camus favor with both the public and French intellectuals.

Even though the rift between Sartre and Camus has been much celebrated, ultimately, the Algerian War caused the most damage to Camus's prestige. Realizing that atrocities were being committed by both French and Arab alike, Camus, again, refused to support either side. This stance, rebuked by both the left and the right, furthered the perception that Camus's moralism was at best ineffectual and at worst simply naive. The tragic war in his homeland and the increasing criticism of his work debilitated Camus, pushing him into a deep depression, a depression so pervasive and so intense that it effectively paralyzed him. The once prolific writer, suffered from writer's block. While he continued to write editorials and a few essays, he did not publish another major work until *The Fall,* which appeared in 1956. *Exile and the Kingdom* followed in 1957.

Winning the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature at the tender age of forty-three brought Camus world wide recognition, but it did little to restore his confidence. His detractors's criticisms, that such accolades were proof that his best work lay behind him, struck a deep fear and he worried that his writer's block would return. Just as he

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[9]Francis Jeanson wrote the first critique of *The Rebel* for Sartre's periodical, *Temps Modernes*. Jeanson was a relative unknown when he penned his harsh review of Camus's essay and this made the sting even more acute. Sartre's initial instinct was "not to talk about the book. That's as insulting as to speak badly about it." Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1979), p. 500.

was beginning to regain his form and vigor, he was killed in an automobile accident in January of 1960. The noble witness was dead at the age of forty-six.

In the years after his death, Camus's reputation on the Continent continued to decline. The intellectual climate in France was changing and literary figures no longer held the esteem they had enjoyed in the past. With the advent of structuralism and post-structuralism, the prestige of literature and authors declined considerably. "In the world of Barthes, Robbe-Grillet, Levi-Strauss, . . . Foucault [and Derrida], Camus was depasse."[10]

Climates of opinion turn, however, and Camus's reputation is growing again. The recent publication of *The First Man*, the novel he was working on at the time of his death, has sold over 200,000 copies and is in its eighth printing.[11] This newest best seller is already drawing another host of scholarly investigations. What accounts for this new interest? Why, thirty-eight years after his death, is Camus still attracting attention?

Symbols and Stories

One key to Camus's enduring significance lies in the fact that throughout his work he engages symbols sacred to the western tradition. The stories he tells, be they in the form of philosophical essays, novels, or plays, explicitly involve integral themes of western civilization. The titles of his works substantiate this: *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *Caligula*, *The Plague*, *The Rebel*, *The Fall*, and *Exile and the*

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[10]Tony Judt, "The Lost World of Albert Camus," *The New York Review of Books*, v. 41, (October 6, 1994), p. 4.

[11]The English translation appeared, courtesy of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. in September of 1995.

Kingdom. The themes these titles evoke are at the foundation of the western experience and they resonate with us two reasons.[12] First, they situate both writer and reader within a tradition. These themes comprise a history, a memory; they provide people with a sense of place and belonging. Second, these themes are attempts to articulate deeply felt and profound experiences. In other words, these are not merely themes, they are symbols. It is Camus's exploration of the West's symbolic existence--the sacred stories--that makes him significant.

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of Camus's work is that he did not merely return to the symbols of the past but penetrated to the experiential center of these symbols and interpreted them in light of his contemporary perspective. Camus's treatment of symbols is an attempt to rename or signify anew the experiences that beckon westerners, experiences they share, both in their heritage and in their contemporary lives. Camus continues to attract attention not because he is a philosophical novelist--many such writers are ignored--but because his work involves human beings at the deepest levels of their being. It is precisely the depth of Camus's insight that makes him significant. Camus's handling of symbolic existence delves into experiences that are, in Eric Voegelin's words, "beyond articulate experience."[13] He recovers and

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[12]At this point in the discussion it is best to restrict the discussion to the "West" for several reasons. First, the western experience has been formed, at least to some degree, by its symbols. Therefore, it is too much to assert that Camus's handling of experience-symbolizations are pertinent to everyone. Second, given the atrocities that have occurred in the West during the twentieth century, from world wars to genocide to the use of nuclear weapons, Camus's focus on western themes is at least understandable if not wise.

[13]Eric Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, v. XII, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 124.

reinvigorates experience-symbolizations[14] that have degenerated or become devoid of significance. According to Voegelin, this deterioration is part of the historical cycle. Symbols, inevitably and unavoidably, lose their experiential connection and thereby their power. When the symbolic horizon disintegrates to the point where symbols are devoid of significant meaning, the only recourse is to renew the inquiry into the depth of one's experience--probe the depth of the psyche.[15] Voegelin poetically describes this phenomenon as "when the night is sinking on the symbols that have had their day, one must return to the night of the depth that is luminous with truth to the man who is willing to seek for it."[16] Camus takes this voyage; he returns to the night of the depth and attempts to "drag up from the depth a truth about reality that hitherto had not been articulate insight."[17] Camus's real prominence, then, lies both in his recognition of the relevance of symbolic horizons and the depth of his penetration into the experiential dimensions of existence.

No scholarly investigation of Camus has sufficiently recognized the symbolic aspects of Camus's thought and work. Previous scholarship has tended to adopt one of

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[14]The terms "experience" and "symbolization" are hyphenated for the specific philosophic purpose of avoiding a belief that experience is prior to the symbolization. A more complete discussion of the co-creation of experience-symbolizations is presented in the theory of symbolization presented in chapter two.

[15]The act of reinvigoration, according to Voegelin, is not peculiar to the west but universal.

[16]Eric Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin,* XVII, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 125.

[17]Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experience," *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, v. XII,* p. 125.

two paths, either an emphasis on the literary or the philosophic aspects of Camus's writings.[18] While these two elements of Camus are obviously significant and intertwined, scholars have tended to focus on one often at the expense of the other. The best treatments of Camus are somewhat of an exception in this regard.

Artist or Philosopher?

Germaine Bree's *Camus*, published in 1959, still ranks as one of the finest treatments of Camus and she immediately confronts the problem of Camus's classification.

> Philosophical and ethical systems, as such, did not interest him, and he himself on several occasions stated that he was not a philosopher. . . . [But] If we think of a writer whose essential effort is directed toward elucidating his own experience through an effort of his intelligence as a "philosopher," then Camus most certainly is a philosopher.[19]

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[18]This tendency to emphasize the literary or aesthetic aspects of Camus is represented by the following scholars: Alex Argyros, *Crimes of Narration: Camus' La Chute*; Germaine Bree, *Camus*; Germaine Bree, ed., *Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays*; John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*; David Ellison, *Understanding Albert Camus*; Brian Fitch, *The Narcissistic Text: A Reading of Camus's Fiction*; Thomas Hanna, *The Thought and Art of Albert Camus*; and Philip Thody, *Albert Camus: A Study of His Work*. Those scholars who see Camus's importance as primarily philosophic are as follows: Paul Archambault, *Camus' Hellenic Sources*; Maurice Friedman, *Problematic Rebel: Melville, Dostoievsky, Kafka, Camus*; Patrick Henry, "Voltaire and Camus: the limits of reason and the awareness of absurdity", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*; Donald Lazere, *The Unique Creation of Albert Camus*; Joseph McBride, *Albert Camus: Philosopher and Litterateur*; Phillip Rhein, *Albert Camus*; David Sprintzen, *Camus: A Critical Examination*; and Fred H. Willhoite, *Beyond Nihilism: Albert Camus's Contribution to Political Thought*.

It should be added that there are two good biographies on Camus in English: Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, and Patrick McCarthy, *Camus*. A third and more recent biography was published 1996, Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus. A Life*. Unfortunately, because the English translation is severally truncated from the French version, Todd's work has little to add.

[19]Germaine Bree, *Camus*, Revised Edition, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), p. 9.

Bree asserts that the problem with identifying Camus as a philosopher largely stems from an overly narrow definition of philosophy and what characterizes a philosopher. Despite Bree's sensitivity on this issue, she goes on to assert that "Camus was first and foremost an artist, an artist who had an exacting idea of what both art and an artist should be. His artistic conscience explained and supported all his other activities . . . the artist's task is essentially to "transfigure" his experience and to "revel" in it."[20] Her work is largely devoted to examining the artistic aspects of Camus. She later reemphasizes this point by stressing "[h]ow personal [Camus's] point of view, how passionate the reasoning, becomes still more evident when we recognize that all Camus's thought inevitably led him to the question of art: his own problem as a writer. . . . All roads lead back to it [art]."[21] This is not to suggest that Bree was dismissive of Camus's philosophic contributions. Indeed, she praises *The Myth of Sisyphus* as "something of a landmark in the history of ideas in our century" because "it opens the door to Camus's violent quarrel with all ideologies and to his exploration of the "way" a man worthy of the name can live."[22] In the end, however, Bree sees Camus's philosophic ventures as stepping stones for his literary work. In fact, she felt that Camus engaged in philosophic activities not to "prove" his points but to gain an audience. She writes: "In order to obtain a hearing Camus felt he must establish some intellectual proof of the validity of his principles. There is a scholasticism of the

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[20]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 195. (Emphasis added).

[22]*Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

twentieth century, as Sartre's monumental *Being and Nothingness* shows, to which Camus paid tribute, though he sought to escape it."[23]

In her better moments, Bree emphasizes Camus's wariness of the traditional philosophic form and properly characterizes his aesthetics as an attempt to find a more appropriate means of expression. This can be seen in her statement that

> [k]nowing the limits of his mind, the artist does not attempt to "reason to the concrete," but through his intelligence he orders a sumptuous "mime" of concrete images that testify to the carnal reality of a universe whose mystery remains intact. This ordering is the second facet of his revolt, for his creation "corrects creation," imposing limits, a coherence--therefore a selection--and a harmony which exists only in the exigencies of man.
>
> There is a Dionysian element in the "mime of life" suggested no doubt by Nietzsche, but it is balanced by the strict injunction that the artist stay within the limits of the reality perceived.[24]

Perhaps Bree's most provocative contribution comes late in her work when she deals with possible source of Camus's creative energy. She states that

> [w]hat is, in truth, the source of beauty which moved Camus both in the work of art and in nature? . . . Rejecting in part both the purely natural and the purely human, and yet at the same time considering each as an autonomous entity, Camus could not completely "reconcile" the elements of his universe: he seemed to be reaching toward that "living transcendency" he mentions and to which might be a key to unity.[25]

She goes on to clarify this portentous statement by pointing to *Exile and the Kingdom* as the beginning of Camus's fourth cycle, "a certain kind of love," and hints that *The First Man* was going to deal with this theme more directly in an attempt to usher in an entirely new perspective. She states that Camus hoped to write a "vast novel," a novel

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[23]*Ibid.*, p. 235.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 246.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 252.

that would take "him back to his point of departure," to do what *The Last Man* had attempted but failed. In other words, he was going to provide more of a resolution in this vast novel and thus "was . . . going to be different from [his] preceding fictional tales."[26] She does not elaborate but ends on this cryptic and enticing comment.

Another early but thorough survey of Camus is John Cruickshank's *Albert Camus: The Literature of Revolt* (1959). Cruickshank spends more time and emphasis on Camus's philosophic elements, especially on the theme of revolt. Reviewing Camus's philosophical essays from a traditional standpoint, Cruickshank does a solid job of revealing their weaknesses. He criticizes Camus's logic in *The Myth of Sisyphus* by stating that "a sudden twist in the argument changes the absurd into a solution . . . . By giving different meanings to the term `absurd' he appears to extricate it from its own implacable logic."[27] He states that it is not a logical embracing of the absurd but a reasoned choice; "his own particular kind of leap with the absurd acting as the springboard."[28] While these, and many other, logical deficiencies with *The Myth* are evident, Cruickshank goes on to recognize that "whatever the correct logical deductions to be made from the absurd *there is no doubting the experience behind it.*"[29] While Camus's argument does not meet certain logical criteria, Cruickshank observes that "one cannot continue to live in awareness of the absurd without having made some

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[26]*Ibid.*, p. 254.

[27]John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 63.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 68.

[29]*Ibid.*, p. 96. (Emphasis added).

concessions to it. The rejection of suicide by Camus, his desire for life, must be a compromise to some extent."[30] Thus, Cruickshank sees Camus's wager with the absurd as a turning point for Camus's thought. He admires the effort of attempting to build positive values, or extract them, from negative beginnings, and sees this as the emergence of the more positive and more political value, revolt. He notes that

> the conqueror emphasizes the particular element of revolt in Camus's absurdist ethic. Its [sic] a revolt carried on in the name of man and of those desires and ideals that are thwarted by existence. . . . At best it leads to actions carried out as if things could be changed. And so the style of revolt, the manner in which it is satisfied, becomes more important than the goal to be reached.[31]

He stresses that "it is in this consciousness of the human situation that both his tragedy and greatness lie."[32] This is because "the experience behind the absurd does not remain static but it generates a sense of revolt or resistance. And one quickly sees that a negative response leads to positive--by saying `no' to one thing you are, inevitably, saying yes to others."[33] Furthermore, Cruickshank is quite taken with the style of Camus's revolt. He comments "the essay [*The Rebel*] ends by advocating revolt, not revolution. But the revolt prescribed is not that of the nineteenth or twentieth century poets and novelists. It resembles most closely the revolt of certain Greek thinkers with its emphasis on man and with its sense of limitations."[34] Despite Cruickshank's overall

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[30]*Ibid.*, p. 64.

[31]*Ibid.*, p. 82.

[32]*Ibid.*, p. 83.

[33]*Ibid.*, p. 148.

[34]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

approval, he finds it littered with similar types of logical inconsistencies as *The Myth of Sisyphus*. He remarks that in the end "Camus always convinces us more when speaking as a moralist than when speaking as a logician."[35] He contends that Camus's effort was, in large part and like so many of his contemporaries, the lofty goal of harmonizing art and philosophy. Cruickshank notes that the

> rise of `philosophical' novels in post World War II Europe was probably due to the `concreteness' of existential philosophies. The general move in philosophy was to move away from abstractions and general theories and grapple with concreteness and particulars. Novels are a perfect vehicle for just such a move.[36]

This is precisely why Cruickshank sees Camus as important. Dismantling much of Camus's efforts in philosophy, Cruickshank looks to his fictional works to locate a better expression of Camus's philosophical themes, especially the notion of revolt. Thus, despite Cruickshank's attention to Camus's essays he, like Bree, focuses on Camus's artistic endeavors.

Cruickshank has high praise for Camus's style and states that in *The Plague*, or in a "symbolist novel, Camus gets the best of two worlds" because *The Plague* "lies midway between" overly allegorical works, like *Gulliver's Travels*, and works that are too realistic.[37] He attributes this balance to Camus's aesthetic convictions that demanded that "novels should take a middle path between the particular and the universal, that they will receive dimensional fullness only from a proper combination of both. Novels should hold the concrete and the abstract in a natural and closely knit

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[35]*Ibid.*, p.64.

[36]*Ibid.*, p. 148.

[37]*Ibid.*, p. 168.

proportion and balance."[38] While he does not develop this aspect of Camus's work to any significant degree, Cruickshank's praise of Camus centers on the use of symbols. According to Cruickshank, symbols transcend history.

> Now in *La Peste* Camus is attempting to diagnose the human dilemma and offer some remedy for it. Yet his view of the nature of this dilemma is that it lies outside the resources of history. There is no temporal remedy which would meet the case. . . . Instead, by means of a central and pervasive symbol, he is concerned to place the problem outside time. This is where he thinks the problem really belongs, and in *La Peste* he moves beyond the wastage of time to *the conservation of the symbol.*[39]

Cruickshank sees the novel as fulfilling a vital philosophical task, and he characterizes it as analogous to Hegel's reconciliation of the singular and the universal.

In the end, Cruickshank's admiration for Camus's fiction rests in his view that form and content are aligned to demonstrate a *philosophical* message. Blending formal and realistic qualities in order to conform to his aesthetics, Camus's fiction embodies moderation. For Cruickshank, this exemplification of moderation or "la mesure" is Camus's most significant contribution.[40] Camus "gives a positive character to his revolt . . . but revolt in the name of values and ideals on which Europe seems to [have] turned its back. The values in whose name he rebels are essentially humane ones. Their influence controls his revolt and gives it impressive dignity and moral force."[41]

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[38]*Ibid.*, p. 169.

[39]Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, p. 169. (Emphasis added).

[40]For a more complete discussion of the meaning of the term "la mesure" see Thomas Warren's intriguing piece "On the Mistranslation of *La Mesure* in Camus's Political Thought", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 30: 1, January, 1992.

[41]John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 222.

According to Cruickshank, despite Camus's apparent proximity to the "existentialists," he is "ultimately an absolutist, an essentialist rather than an existentialist, in the sphere of morals. . . . Camus is a static moralist . . . he puts his confidence in certain previously established ideals."[42] Fortunately, Cruickshank shows some moderation himself and states that obviously Camus "is not simply attempting to put the clock back, nor is he a writer who strives to understand the present in order that the past wisdom which he offers can be made more palatable to it."[43] Again, Camus is seeking a middle path.

Perhaps the finest of the early forays into Camus as a political philosopher is Fred Willhoite's, *Beyond Nihilism: Albert Camus's Contribution to Political Thought*, published in 1968. Willhoite agrees with Bree when he notes that Camus cannot be seen as political philosopher if we are looking for a "total intellectual system."[44] Willhoite attributes Camus's hesitancy to engage in such a process to his "existential method." He states: "Camus's effort to remain faithfully existential, avoiding generalized or didactic abstractions, accounts, at least in part . . . for his attempts to illustrate and enrich the content of his ideas by embodying them in the concrete personages and events of novels, stories, and plays, rather than presenting his thoughts solely in philosophical essays."[45] Like Cruickshank, Willhoite is quite taken with

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[42]*Ibid.*, p. 222.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 224.

[44]Fred Willhoite, *Beyond Nihilism: Albert Camus's Contribution to Political Thought*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), p. viii.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. viii.

Camus's approach, but Willhoite sees Camus's attempt "to overcome the contemporary threat of nihilism by re-establishing norms for human conduct in the political realm" as his most important contribution.[46] He states, while "it is unlikely that we shall see emerge a new common set of moral principles based upon a generally accepted vision of reality . . . there is, however, no shortage of candidates, Freudian, Marxian, Common law theorist, etc. But, and more interestingly, there are thinkers (i.e., Camus) who have wrestled with these problems who are not easily categorized."[47] Willhoite reveals an affinity for innovative approaches when he presents "existential thought as a response to the inadequate choices of positivism and idealism," and praises Camus's thought as one "lived rather than reasoned."[48] Willhoite's analysis of Camus never strays far from this conviction; indeed, he sees *experience* as the root of all of Camus's thought. He states "absurdity was never an abstract category. Rather, it was always a deeply felt existential reality that does not, as we shall see, yield at all readily to systematic philosophic treatment . . . his whole position is one of preference and not based on intellectually compelling logical demonstration."[49]

In addition to his the emphasis on and recognition of experience, Willhoite's examination of Camus as a political philosopher is dominated by a very traditional theme--philosophic anthropology. He states that

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[46]*Ibid.*, p. viii.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. viii.

[48]*Ibid.*, p. 11.

[49]*Ibid.*, p. 23.

> a thorough exploration of Camus's vision of human nature and the human condition is an essential preliminary to any meaningful attempt to comprehend both his philosophical method and his responses to the significant substantive questions of contemporary political inquiry. Camus's political thought would be, I believe, severely truncated--in fact seriously distorted--if no extensive effort were made to explicate his fundamental philosophical and anthropological conceptions.[50]

He notes that "it should now be quite apparent that he was persistently concerned with the basic questions of philosophic anthropology and of ethics: what is man, and how should he live?"[51] Arguing that "Camus never wrote a treatise on human nature, but in a real sense he wrote almost nothing except observations and commentary on the nature of man," Willhoite attempts to explicate Camus's various comments in an effort to reveal Camus's theory of human nature.[52]

Willhoite begins by attempting to deduce Camus's view on the nature and origin of evil. In this attempt he, notably, looks not to his philosophical essays but to his novels. In *The Plague* he notes the narrator's remark that evil "`always comes from ignorance . . . [with] the most incorrigible vice being that of an ignorance that fancies it knows everything and therefore claims for itself the right to kill.'"[53] Thus, evil

> is a blindness, a lack of `the uttermost clearsightedness' in regard to the human condition, which produces evil. This is much more a spiritual than it is an intellectual defect; it is failure to discern and be faithful to the essential unity among men known through the experience of the dialogical communion. And one of the most common causes of this blinding is captivation by ideological abstractions which provide their

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[50]*Ibid.*, p. ix.

[51]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

[52]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

[53]*Ibid.*, p. 95.

> adherents with a false sense of knowing ultimate, total truth. This is `the most incorrigible vice' and the one most pregnant with human evil."[54]

Camus did not make this mistake; he never claimed to have unearthed the origin of evil and, in fact, felt that the resolution to such a query was beyond human capability. Willhoite observes: "Whether man's nature is in an ultimate sense innately good or evil, or, more precisely, what is the primal cause of human evil, was for Camus finally an unanswerable question and hence probably not extremely relevant to our real concerns."[55] What Camus does claim to understand is that certain conditions allow evil to run rampant, and the primary impetus behind such conditions involve inflated epistemological claims. Thus, Camus's philosophic anthropology holds "that man possesses an efficacious but limited and fallible reason. On this point he stood for an `intermediate truth' between the extremes for a world-encompassing rationalism and a vitalistic irrationalism."[56] The "political problems which he [Camus] considered especially critical he viewed as largely the result of an excessive and inflated rationalism. . . . "such claims take us far beyond the certainties of our experience and result in neglect of concrete, existentially perceived human truth."[57] For Willhoite, this inflated rationalism prevents humans from fulfilling a crucial element of human nature--the common capacity for dialogical communion. The ability to effectively communicate derives from the existential awareness of human limitation; and "from

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[54] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

awareness of this existential certainty there emerges a meaning for life which abstract reason is incapable of providing. A creature who desires happiness, man finds his greatest fulfillment in relationships of openness, directness, mutuality, and presence with nature and with his fellow men."[58] For Willhoite, an accurate philosophic anthropology is vital for authentic politics:

> One must have fully and openly encountered life in existential awareness and found it, even if in some respects absurd and harrowing, essentially good and meaningful, before ethical reflection can be humanly fruitful. Otherwise ethics can all too easily become a closed system increasingly isolated from experience and inspire fanatical efforts to crush human realities inconsistent with the reign of abstract ideals.[59]

It is important that Camus finds meaning and goodness not only in the natural beauty of the world, which his writings explicitly exalt, but also in the interaction and relationship with other human beings. Ethics stem from good human relations. Camus's conception of human nature not only precludes a solipsistic solution, but establishes him as a truly social thinker.

Once Willhoite establishes Camus's philosophic anthropology to his satisfaction, he moves to the more overt political aspects of his thought. Beginning with Camus's critique of ideologies, Willhoite considers Camus's more general political opinions, such as syndicalism, capital punishment, and his critique of bourgeois liberalism. These analyses are useful; but the key to Willhoite's analysis and, ultimately, the lasting importance of his work, stems from his explication of Camus's views on human nature and its influences on epistemology. Willhoite observes that

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[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

> Camus implicitly maintained that what we learn through existential "knowing" is just as valid for our genuinely human needs and purposes as are the discoveries and theories of empirical science. And in fact the former approach can provide us with a kind of knowledge that the latter can never discern, namely the "awareness of meaning and value" that we can attain only through involvement of our whole beings in dialogical relationships.[60]

Willhoite is relying on Maurice Friedman's treatment of Camus in *The Problematic Rebel.* Friedman, who also argues that Camus's status as a political thinker lies primarily in his awareness of the human condition, contends that fruitful explorations and treatments of normative topics can only begin from an assessment of humans as social beings. In other words, inquiries into human nature must go beyond examination of the individual and include the relationships to others and to the world. According to Friedman, these external qualities are precisely why traditional scientific means have failed to assess the human condition adequately. Traditional methods within the social sciences ignore human wholeness; they miss the "I-Thou" relationship. Both Friedman and Willhoite are working out of Martin Buber's philosophic model that states that "Only I-Thou sees this wholeness as the whole person in unreserved relation with what is over against him rather than as a sum of parts, some of which are labelled objective . . . and some subjective."[61] The "I-Thou" relationship, which Willhoite contends is a derivative of Camus's view of human nature, establishes Camus's thought as important because of its epistemological and ontological implications for authentic human communities. Willhoite sees in Camus a kindred spirit, someone who also believes that the dominance of the positive sciences is at the root of contemporary

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[60] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

nihilism. By refusing to examine, discuss, or even grant the possibility of entire realms of human existence, sciences such as positivism unintentionally diminish the importance of and possibility for community. Thus, Willhoite sees Camus's philosophic anthropology, complete with his emphasis on dialogic relationships, as a significant recovery; it is Camus's primary contribution to political thought.

A more recent examination of Camus's political thought comes from David Sprintzen's *Camus: A Critical Examination*, published in 1988. Sprintzen is disturbed with the level of scholarship on Camus. He states that while Camus has received a lot of attention, "few have adequately appreciated [his] cultural significance."[62] He feels that Camus's importance lies in his "addressing our civilization at its metaphysical and mythical roots." Thus, "Camus seeks to diagnose those interior forces seemingly propelling us toward destruction: to explore their inner logic in order to suggest the precondition of, and the practical steps required for, a cultural rebirth."[63] He continues: "Focusing upon the central drama of the West--its root metaphors or metaphysics, its agony and its future, its exile and kingdom--his works speaks to us at a level below that of our conscious awareness." [64] He believes that Camus's writings can, and were intended to, be utilized as a "mythological mirror"; we learn about ourselves and our condition through Camus's use of symbols and myths. Despite the obvious relevance of such themes for politics, Camus has largely been ignored by philosophers and political

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[62]David Sprintzen, *Camus: A Critical Examination*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), p. xiii.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. xiii.

[64]*Ibid.*, p. xiv.

theorists. Sprintzen remarks that "serious attention" has been sparse and that this, in part, explains why Camus has been utilized by scholars. Most scholars who have dealt with Camus have operated with a "prior ideological commitment." They have characterized Camus as a brave "opponent of Marxism and revolution and . . . praised [him] for his pacifism and his liberalism" instead of commenting upon his philosophic and artistic contributions.[65] The ideological intentions behind these examinations (which he does not list) are far too narrow in scope to appreciate Camus fully.

Sprintzen, like Willhoite, sees Camus's most notable philosophic contribution as the development of his dialogic community. He contends that the current fascination with language would be greatly enhanced by a reexamination of Camus. He states, "Camus's exploration of the preconditions for the creation of dialogic communities--his civilization du dialogue--makes a significant contribution to the consideration of these issues."[66] Sprintzen's aim, then, is to correct this mistake by closely examining both Camus's philosophical development and his dialogic communities. He contends that the "sociopolitical problems involved in the practical construction of a dialogic community . . . is only a development of the inner logic of Camus's life and thought."[67]

While Sprintzen's treatment of Camus and his works is thorough and insightful, he nevertheless treads well worn paths. Sprintzen's main contribution is his discussion and advancement of the "dialogue at the center."[68] This theme involves a reorientation

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[65]*Ibid.*, p. xv.

[66]*Ibid.*, p. xvi.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. xvii.

[68]*Ibid.*, p. 246.

toward the world. Sprintzen describes it as recognition that "[t]ruth, love, intelligence can thus be won in the relative, for the moment only through a concrete risking in which humans, recognizing their common destiny, commit themselves to the construction of an experiential sharing. Only the construction of community can draw us out of the metaphysical isolation to which the experience of the absurd bears witness."[69] Arguing that Camus's thought was developing toward a dialogic community, he maintains that "[i]t is not what people will talk about that is at issue here. That is for them to decide within the developing processes of communal life. The concern rather is for means, which . . . constitute qualitatively and methodologically an essential ingredient in the end to be achieved."[70] In short, Sprintzen defines a dialogic community in terms of its characteristics. It can only begin with mutual respect. "For I cannot speak to one whom I do not respect. I can only speak at; I cannot talk with. Dialogue, in being dialogic, recognizes the transaction between two `logoi'--two modes of speaking, two ways of being-in-the-world. . . . As an open-ended transaction it bears witness to respect for the possible contributions of The Other and thus a lack of finality of one's own position."[71] This is, at base, an epistemological position. Sprintzen phrases it this way: "there is no privileged access to the truth, no path of insight that is in principle inaccessible to The Other. It thus undercuts any claim of a right to suppress the views and oppress the person of The Other. In short, there can be no transcendent legitimation of power in a dialogical

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[69]*Ibid.*, p. 246.

[70]*Ibid.*, p. 246.

[71]*Ibid.*, p. 254.

community."[72] These quotations make evident, however, that Sprintzen is not just positing a recognition of the other and the hope for community. Sprintzen is attributing metaphysical and ontological positions to Camus. "The possibility of dialogue is destroyed as soon as a claim to the Truth, and to the privileged insight upon which it must ultimately rest [is made]. . . . Any metaphysical claim that Truth is the only basis for public policy would seem to be implicitly just such a tyrannical act."[73] Thus, according to Sprintzen, the only possible avenue to a dialogic community lies first in an epistemological recognition. Camus's political significance lies not so much in the precise recommendations within his work as it does in the call for a new form of communication. Politics can only succeed if humans, both as individuals and as institutional societies, relinquish adherence to metaphysically grounded truth.

Despite his praise, Sprintzen does not believe that Camus accomplished this task himself. Indeed, Camus's view of history as "an open opportunity that remains to be rendered productive through vigilant revolt" is seen by Sprintzen as analogous to the classical liberal conception of nature and technology.[74] A characterization of nature as something "out there" to be manipulated by autonomous man, Sprintzen maintains, does not escape the subject/object dichotomy. Thus, according to Sprintzen, Camus retains a false ontological orientation. "The materials of historical-technical existence are grasped as essentially separate from the individual. They confront the individual and can be used either constructively or destructively. They can ennoble the

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[72]*Ibid.*, p. 247.

[73]Sprintzen, *Camus: A Critical Examination*, p. 254.

[74]David Sprintzen quoting Camus, *Camus: A Critical Examination*, p. 290.

environment or destroy it. But they do not constitute its inner being. They are not the stuff of its character and destiny."[75] In short, Sprintzen disagrees with Willhoite and contends that Camus has failed to comprehend man's authentic relation to the world. He believes that Camus's *mistake* lies in his philosophic anthropology, in his failure to see man as "within an engulfing history."[76] Sprintzen's interpretation locates Camus's greatest weakness where Willhoite found the greatest strength--his philosophic anthropology.

Whereas there is some validity to Sprintzen's claims, a close examination of Camus's theory of symbols will, in the end, restore the potency to Camus's philosophic anthropology, especially with regard to man's ontological position. An orientation toward symbols, one that involves legitimate reinvigoration, cannot view history as Sprintzen depicts it.

The most recent book length treatment of Camus is Jeffrey Isaac's, *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion*. Isaac extends scholarship on Camus by placing him in part of a larger philosophical movement. According to Isaac, "the current suspicion of grand philosophical narratives and Promethean political projects" points to a certain commonality among various thinkers of the mid-twentieth century.[77] Identifying this shared perspective as "antifoundational," Isaac goes beyond the traditional notion of postmodern politics and includes in his analysis thinkers as diverse as Rorty, McIntyre,

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[75]*Ibid.*, p. 277.

[76]*Ibid.*, p. 247.

[77]Jeffrey Isaac, *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 11.

Voegelin, Derrida, Strauss, and Foucault. Attibuting this new antifoundational attitude to a declining faith in ideological thinking, an obvious improvement, Isaac nevertheless laments certain accompanying deficiencies. According to Isaac, "[a]cross the political spectrum political theory seems to have lost its nerve, experiencing a disenchanting skepticism and possessing little of the possibilities of creative historical agency."[78] In short, political theory has ceased to be relevant. "[T]he antifoundational turn in political theory is disturbingly apolitical."[79] Arguing that contemporary thinkers tend to neglect concrete issues, Isaac criticizes thinkers from both ends of the political spectrum. For example, Alasdair MacIntyre's revived Thomism fails to discuss the particular injustices incurred, or, at the very least, tolerated, by the institutional Church. And, while Derrida's "last word on racism" is provocative, he nowhere deals with the specifics of systems such as apartheid. According to Isaac, these omissions, coming from both the left and the right, are illustrative of the tentative character of contemporary political theory. Yet, the world is not waiting for theorists to regain their confidence. "While political theorists go on about the pointlessness talk about foundations, the democrats of Central Europe have set about the task of establishing new foundations for their politics."[80]

Given his characterization of paralyzed political theory, Isaac quite understandably deals with thinkers known for both their theoretical and personal commitment: Arendt and Camus. Driven by personal commitment as well as theories

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[78] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

of rebellion, Arendt and Camus were deeply engaged intellectuals. In other words, while casting Arendt and Camus as part of a greater movement, Isaac sees them as exceptional. In strictly theoretical terms, while Arendt and Camus accept Nietzsche's diagnosis, they personally struggle against his conclusions. "The writings of Hannah Arendt and Albert Camus are important because they point the way to a more satisfactory political orientation."[81] Isaac distinguishes Arendt and Camus from antifoundational thinkers such as Derrida and Foucault because, unlike those thinkers, Arendt and Camus sought to reconstruct authentic politics.

> In short, their common vision, far from being edifying, agonistic, or blandly conventional, sought to reappropriate the historical themes of modern rebellion and to revitalize public life. Both sought to stalk lost deeds, but not to shoot them down. Neither was content to articulate a negative dialectic, however profound, and both sought to build on the ruins of the twentieth-century crisis of modernity they experienced.[82]

Situating Camus within the antifoundational vein of political theory, Isaac confronts one of the central issues within Camus's thought: is it "possible to live *without appeal*."[83] For Isaac, Camus's response to this question--that the rejection of metaphysical grounding for politics does not prevent humans from acting--is the key to Camus's significance. Most important, unlike so many other thinkers, Camus did not simply devise a theoretical justification for action; he engaged politics himself.

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[81] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 11. It should be noted that Isaac readily admits that political theory would profit from a similar analysis of several other thinkers from this period. In other words, by suggesting that Arendt and Camus are exceptional, Isaac does not mean that they are the only two members of their generation representative of the "constructive" side of antifoundational political theory. For a thorough discussion of his reasons for choosing Arendt and Camus see pp. 12-16.

[83] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 52.

Isaac identifies the shared cultural context of Arendt and Camus as crucial to their political theory. There was something new, something unique, about the twentieth century, and Camus and Arendt recognized it. This is important because the key to authentic action, for Isaac, Arendt, as well as Camus, lie in recognizing and diagnosing the uniqueness of the century.

> Contrary to the more buoyant attitude to be found in political perspectives like utilitarian liberalism or scientific socialism, [they] offered probing insights into the monstrousness and absurdity of modern forms of mastery and self-mastery. . . . [T]hey helped identify a pathos of modernity that corresponded to *the experience of exile* that Arendt and Camus shared. And though neither writer was an existentialist, the common view of the human condition on which they coverged was based in part on a critical appropriation of the themes present in this quite variegated literary and philosophical genre.[84]

Yet, while the horrors of this century of total war and unheralded destruction chastened both Arendt and Camus, neither embraced pessimism. Indeed, as members of that elite circle of resistance intellectuals, both Arendt and Camus were buoyed by specific acts of resistance against totalitarianism of whatever variety. It is in this sense that Isaac announces that his "book is about modern rebellion."[85] "For both Arendt and Camus the resistance to Nazism represented a beacon of hope in the darkness of war, destruction, and death."[86] By comparing and contrasting these two committed intellectuals, Isaac hopes to glean a political theory that has foundations without foundationalism.

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[84]Isaac, *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion*, p. 33. (Emphasis added).

[85]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

[86]*Ibid.*, p. 35.

With this auspicious goal, Isaac explores Arendt and Camus's criticism of totalitarianism and their analyses of historical and metaphysical revolution, as well as the ambiguities and strengths of a humanist sensibility (which he attributes to both thinkers). While Isaac's treatment is thorough and, for the most part, accurate, his conclusions on Camus are fairly conventional. The most promising aspect of Isaac's treatment is a section entitled "Foundations without Foundationalism." Unfortunately, Isaac does not present a systematic analysis of how and where Camus derives a sense of acting without ultimate justification. In fact, he argues that plain "decency" demands that humans act in spite of the confrontation with the absurd. "Camus sees that though we need foundations, to seek the unshakable support of rock represents a flight from responsibility. It is wiser simply to plant our feet on the ground as best we can, frankly acknowledging that we will have to adjust our footing as the soil shifts beneath us."[87]

Following this rather disappointing theoretical analysis of his central thesis, Isaac turns to the details of Arendt's and Camus's political thinking. Driven by concerns about concrete action, this is a logical thing to do and there is much merit in this part of the work. Central to Isaac's analysis is his explication of Camus's sense of limits throughout his concrete political positions, from his denial of grand historical or ideological metanarratives in his nonfiction, to his cries, through characters such as Rieux, for political limits. Most compelling, however, is Isaac's discussion of politics and judgment in Camus's journalism and fiction. Arguing that Camus's notion of limits leads to "representational thinking"--a concept very similar to Buber's "I-thou" or Sprintzen's "dialogue at the center"--Isaac notes that "Camus upholds the need for moral

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[87] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

judgment while renouncing a posture of moral self-righteousness" by recognizing ontological and epistemological realities.[88] In other words, a rebel is "someone who is capable of acting decisively--even violently--but who is also capable of acknowledging his own limits, most especially the limit represented by the other against whom he acts. This searching incorporation of the standpoint of others, even when those others are opponents, is the hallmark of Camus's political thinking."[89]

Ultimately, Isaac seeks to bring theoretical substance to Camus's political positions by pointing out the similarities between Camus and Arendt. Applying "Arendtian conceptions of praxis, representative thinking, and political community," to Camus's thought, Isaac tries to make Camus more concrete, more relevant.[90] This is a noble aspiration and, in some sense, he achieves his aim. While he criticizes both thinkers from a neo-Marxist perspective, Isaac celebrates the positive characteristics of their theories of rebellion and their virulent calls for engagement. Pointing to the recent developments in Eastern and Central Europe, Issace notes that "[t]he praxis groups like the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly exemplifies the model of politics presented by Camus's Dr. Rieux and Arendt's revolutionary elites. It is a self-constituted rebellion by those, delegated by no one, who have taken responsibility for their future by themselves."[91] There is much credit to Isaac's position. Given the extraordinary events of the last eight years, astute theories of rebellion such as Arendt's and Camus's should be revisited.

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[88] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

Nevertheless, without a more complete understanding of Camus's notion of foundations without foundationalism, Isaac's work falls short. The central deficiency in Camus's work is not resolved. What does it mean, concretely, to say that humans can have foundations without lapsing into doctrinal foundationalism? Camus's theory of symbols speaks to this very issue.

These sources do an admirable job of dealing with both the philosophic and aesthetic attributes of Camus and his work. Taken in light of each other, these sources offer a rather full account of Camus. However, none sufficiently deals with Camus's treatment of symbols; and this, given Camus's explicit use of themes like the fall, exile, and kingdom, as well as Greek myths, is surprising. In fact, even scholars like Sprintzen, who realize that Camus was "[f]ocusing upon the central drama of the West--its root metaphors or metaphysics, its agony and its future, its exile and kingdom," neglect to explore this rich vein.[92]

Symbols As the Source

Given Camus's prominent use of symbols, coupled with numerous comments throughout his nonfiction about the structure and significance of myths and symbols, it is surprising that there has not been a systematic examination of Camus and symbols. Given this void, this dissertation is an attempt to demonstrate that Camus's significance lies both in his recognition of the vital nature of symbolic existence and in his efforts to revitalize symbols to meet contemporary experiential needs. Confronted by the nihilism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Camus grasped that we understand and find meaning in the world through identification with and participation in symbols.

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[92]*Ibid.*, p. xiv.

This realization prompted Camus to engage in a process of revitalizing the symbolic horizon in an effort to assuage existential angst. Unlike so many of his generation, he believed that despite the debased condition of the West, there were still symbols within the tradition that contained existential and experiential insights that were, or could be, valid for contemporary political dilemmas. Additionally, Camus believed that narratives and symbols were the vehicles by which authentic ethical, moral, and political traditions could be established.

In order to demonstrate that this was Camus's aim, several questions must be addressed. The first task is to examine the thinkers most responsible for the revival of philosophic interest in symbols, myths, and narratives: Ernst Cassirer, Eric Voegelin, and Paul Ricoeur, as well as to situate Camus in that revival. A brief examination of their thought reveals that symbols, myths and narratives are not tangential but deal with the fundamental issues within philosophy. Indeed, symbols and narratives may prove to be both a profound rejoinder to many postmodern critiques as well as a path to the revitalization of political, social, and ethical existence.

Next, it must be established that Camus consciously turned to art and aesthetics to "resolve" certain philosophic problems that ail the contemporary world. Central to this issue is Camus perspective on reason. Camus, who has frequently been mislabeled an irrationalist or philosopher of the absurd, always maintained that reason was efficacious. Nevertheless, Camus argued that reason alone could not escape the quagmire of nihilism.[93] He declares: "The world today is one, in fact, but its unity is

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[93]Camus's critique of reason is well known. It has been handled by a variety of scholars and the most sustained treatment to date is Patrick Henry's "Voltaire and Camus: the limits of reason and the awareness of the absurdity", *Studies on Voltaire*

the unity of nihilism. Civilization is only possible if, by renouncing the nihilism of formal principles and nihilism without principles, the world rediscovers the road to a creative synthesis."[94] A "creative synthesis" is required because the shared passion of the day is a confrontation with the absurd. The inflated faith in rationality has disappeared. This, in turn, results in "thought's renouncing of its prestige and its resignation to being no more than the intelligence that works up appearances and covers with images what has no reason. If the world were clear, art would not exist."[95] Put another way, "[e]xpression begins where thought ends."[96] Reason leads to the realization that complete comprehension of the world and the meaning of existence is beyond rational grasp. This does not mean, however, that humans must submit to resignation or despair. It will be shown that art and symbols provide a potential recourse. In short, this work reveals that Camus was a story teller for philosophic, moral, and political reasons.

Third, it must be revealed that Camus was, through his aesthetic endeavors, purposefully engaged in a process of reinvigorating western symbols. The first aspect of this task--demonstrating that he was indeed involved with sacred symbols of the West--is simple; his works are replete with examples. The second challenge,

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and the Eighteenth Century, v. CXXXXVIII, (Oxfordshire: The Voltaire Foundation), 1975.

[94]Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower, (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 273.

[95]Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 95.

[96]*Ibid.*, p. 99.

demonstrating that his handling of symbols was akin to a process of reinvigoration by "altering" the original symbols to meet contemporary experience, is more difficult. It can be achieved by closely examining Camus's modification of traditional western symbols. It will be seen that Camus's glance backwards was not a vain attempt simply to return to the past but a more subtle process of recovery and reinvigoration. Camus's rejection of a naive conservatism is aptly revealed in his *Notebooks*, where he states:

> Modern intelligence is in utter confusion. Knowledge has become so diffuse that the world and the mind have lost all point of reference. It is a fact that we are suffering from nihilism. But the most amazing things are the admonitions to "turn backward." Return to the Middle Ages, to primitive mentality, to the soil, to religion, to the arsenal of worn-out solutions. To grant a shadow of efficacy to those panaceas, we should have to act as if our acquired knowledge had ceased to exist, as if we had learned nothing, and pretend in short to erase what is inerasable. We should have to cancel the contribution of several centuries and the incontrovertible acquisitions of a mind that has finally (in its last step forward) re-created chaos on its own. That is impossible. In order to be cured, we must make our peace with this lucidity, this clairvoyance. We must take into account the glimpses we have suddenly had of our exile. Intelligence is in confusion not because knowledge has changed everything. It is because it cannot accept that change. It hasn't "got accustomed to that idea." When this does happen, the confusion will disappear. Nothing will remain but the change and the clear knowledge that the mind has of it. There's a whole civilization to be reconstructed.[97]

Camus was not interested in looking back to an "arsenal of worn out solutions" but was seeking to "reconstruct" civilization. This was to be accomplished through the revitalization of the vital symbols within the western tradition. He made this intention clear early on by defining his task. He stated: "But for those who do not want to avoid their responsibilities, the essential task is to rehabilitate intelligence by regenerating the

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[97]Albert Camus, *Notebooks: 1942-1951*, trans. Philip Thody, (New York: Paragon Books, 1991), pp. 15-16.

subject matter that it treats, to give back all its true meaning to the mind by restoring to culture its true visage of health and sunlight."[98] Camus's intention, then, was to recover "true meaning" by "regenerating the subject matter." In other words, Camus sought to salvage the valid insights of symbols and make them relevant to the contemporary world by distilling out the existential insights from the dogmatic and doctrinaire trappings that had grown around them. In Voegelinian language, he wanted to regain an understanding of the true health and sunlight that was still luminous within.

The key to Camus's, or for that matter any reinvigoration, is participation in the experiential elements of a symbol. It will be seen that Camus penetrates symbols to their experiential core and alters symbols by means of his own existential experiences. Yet, the historical nature of existence means that Camus's perspective and orientation toward a symbol must be different. He cannot simply return to the original experience-symbolization but must evaluate the symbol on the basis of his personal experience, an experience that is shaped by both individual and social factors. The effort to re-articulate an experience-symbolization after adjusting it to one's experience is the process of reinvigoration; and in Camus's case, it is motivated by a desire to recover legitimate philosophic and moral insights of the past and make them, once again, pertinent.

Reinvigoration cannot be an arbitrary or subjectivist project; there are boundaries and limits to any legitimate "alteration" of symbolizations. Thus, the legitimacy of Camus's recovery must be examined. A close inspection of the manner in

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[98]Albert Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p. 196.

which Camus treated symbols reveals that his recovery was an idiosyncratic amalgamation of both the Greek and Christian experience and that this is why so many scholars have had trouble categorizing him. He was neither a Greek nor a Christian but strove to carve out a third way. The question to be resolved is, then, the legitimacy of this unique amalgamation. But just how do we determine whether particular symbolizations are legitimate? While this thorny question could be approached from a variety of angles, this treatment will rely heavily on Eric Voegelin's resolution to this problem. Voegelin states:

> The validity can and must be tested by placing the propositions in the historical field of experiences and their symbolizations, i.e., in the time dimensions of existence itself. The validating question will have to be: Do we have to ignore and eclipse a major part of the historical field in order to maintain the truth of the propositions, as the fundamentalist adherents of this or that ideological doctrine must do; or are the propositions recognizably equivalent with the symbols created by our predecessors in the search of truth about human existence? The test of truth, to put it pointedly, will be the lack of originality in the propositions.[99]

Voegelin believes that comparing experience-symbolizations with previous symbolizations generated throughout history is the best way to evaluate the legitimacy of symbols. This should not be seen, however, as verification through mere consensus. What Voegelin is actually asserting is that throughout history examinations of reality by sensitive and articulate souls have generated a series of symbolizations that reflect discoveries about the structure of reality. In other words, an examination of the *trail of symbolizations* provides, in effect, clues to ontology. It is true that given the flux of

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[99]Eric Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 122.

existence no one perspective, embodied in a single symbolization, reveals the whole truth about reality. But, taken together, each symbolization offers insight into the apparent structure of reality. In short, the trail of symbolizations, if taken in the aggregate, provides ontological criteria which can be used to evaluate new additions to the symbolic horizon. Voegelin's guiding criterion, then, is actually an ontological one. The validating question, after all, is whether or not we must "eclipse a major part of the historical field." This is a demand that new symbolizations not ignore the insights of previous articulations. But what are the ontological insights illuminated by previous symbolizations? While there are many, the most crucial is *the tensionality of human existence*; or human existence within the In-Between. Voegelin states: "The reality determined by the coordinates is the In-Between reality, intelligible as such by the consciousness of Nous and Apeiron as its limiting poles. All "eristic phantasies" which try to convert the limits of the metaxy, be it in noetic height or the apeironic depth, into a phenomenon within the metaxy are to be excluded as false."[100] Thus, the invaluable tool for the evaluation of symbols and reinvigoration is whether or not the process violates the ontological position of human existence in the metaxy. Is the tension of the In-Between maintained in Camus's recovery or is his merely another among the long litany of modern symbolizations that is engendered by too extreme an experience, one so immoderate that it denies the realities of existence itself? This will be the test.

The strength of Camus's approach does not hinge solely upon the legitimacy of his recovery. This investigation endeavors to demonstrate not only that Camus's

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[100]Eric Voegelin, "Reason," *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Volume XII, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), p. 290. (Emphasis added).

specific recovery is valid but also that the approach he took was both legitimate and philosophically astute. In other words, a significant aspect of his total contribution is the fact that he provides a framework that has the potential to ameliorate the contemporary crisis of nihilism. His use of narratives and the process of reinvigorating symbols should be seen as tools that can be utilized to form ethical and political orders. A significant aspect of his recovery is, then, the fact that he reawakens the pertinence of symbolic existence and political and ethical stories as a form by which to redress the contemporary malaise.

Since symbols are at the theoretical core of this dissertation these issues will be handled by means of a close examination of particular symbols Camus utilized. In order for this investigation to be fruitful, the symbols selected for examination must meet certain criteria. The first and most obvious requirement is that the symbols are dominant and persistent themes in Camus's works.

The second but equally significant requirement is that the symbols are prominent and continuous themes within previous traditions. In order to establish that Camus was engaged in a process of reinvigoration the symbols chosen must be found to exist in previous cultures. Only in this way can we see the extent to which Camus alters symbols to meet contemporary experiential demands. A corollary of this requirement is that the symbols can be found in both the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions. If these symbols, or their equivalents, can be found in both worlds then, and only then, can we discover the extent to which Camus melded these perspectives. In other words, the proof that Camus's elusive identity lies in his unique amalgamation of

these two world-views hinges upon the symbols being drawn from both the Greek and Judeo-Christian perspectives.

The third theoretical requisite is that the symbols are related in such a way as to provide new insight into Camus as a political thinker. How does the recognition of Camus's project of reinvigoration alter or enhance Camus's contributions to political thought?

Given these exacting criteria the symbols selected to be examined in this work are exile, judgment, and kingdom. It will be shown that these themes are symbols in the sense defined and that they are dominant and persistent themes throughout Camus's works, early and late. The evidence that these themes can be found in both the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions is quite compelling. The proof of their significance in Greece can be made apparent by a brief look at Plato. What was Plato attempting to do in *The Republic* if not create a kingdom where justice could reign? Was it not a vision, albeit not an attainable one, of what man should aspire to? Was it not a vision of kingdom? And was not Socrates at least a spiritual and intellectual exile, one so estranged from his polis that he felt compelled to put Athens on trial--to judge an entire city? These symbols are equally conspicuous in the tragedians and the epic poets. They are evident in Aeschylean, Sophoclean, even Euripidean tragedy, as well as in the Homeric works, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. The experiences of exile and the pining for kingdoms predate classical philosophy. While exile, judgment, and kingdom are storied themes in ancient Greece, they are even more readily identifiable with the Hebrew and Christian traditions. The historical and scriptural account of the Egyptian

exile is perhaps the most obvious example, but exile, judgment, and kingdom are pervasive themes throughout the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In both traditions these themes meet the criteria of symbols. Not only do they capture the experience of historical events but they signify profound spiritual and metaphysical musing--efforts to grasp the meaning of the universe. In other words, these themes are prominent because they are symbols in the sense previously described. They resonate within the experience of ancients just as they resonate within us, because they are efforts to embody experiences that go beyond articulate expression, experiences that are inherently paradoxical. They are attempts to capture or express profound experiences, experiences felt on both the individual and societal level.

Yet, most important for this study, these themes constitute a coherent political vision, complete with a description of the condition (exile), a judgment binding or mediating both the condition and the response (judgment), and a proposed resolution or response (kingdom). This is true in the original contexts as well as in Camus's work.

The works of Camus considered in this dissertation are the two philosophical essays, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*; the essays on more general topics, collected in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, and *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*; the novels or novellas, *The Stranger*, *The Plague*, *The Fall* and *Exile and the Kingdom*. His *Notebooks 1935-1942* and *Notebooks 1942-1951* and his *American Journals* are consulted for insight into his intentions.

This introductory chapter argues that Camus's significance lies in his recognition and manipulation of symbolic existence. It contends that Camus was purposefully

involved in reinvigorating western symbols in an effort to address the contemporary philosophical and spiritual malaise.

The second chapter presents a theory of symbolization that will be used to evaluate the symbols: exile, judgment, and kingdom. This theory of symbolization is gleaned from the works of Ernst Cassirer, Eric Voegelin, and Paul Ricoeur. This examination of the reintegration of symbols, myths, and narratives into philosophic discourse reveals the importance, philosophically and politically, of Camus's project.

The third chapter examines Camus's belief that art and narrative are more appropriate for addressing symbolic existence. Camus emphasized art for specific philosophic reasons; reasons that stemmed from his firm belief that human rationality is efficacious but limited. It is important to stress that while Camus contends that humans cannot know all things, he does not believe that this results in nihilism. Additionally, this chapter briefly explores the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions in terms of the above mentioned symbols.

Chapters four, five, and six analyze the particular symbols: exile, judgment, and kingdom. Chapter four is an exploration of exile and judgment in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Stranger*, and *The Fall*. Chapter five is an examination of exile and rebellion in *The Rebel* and the first four parts of *The Plague*. Chapter six deals with Camus's vision of exile and kingdom as presented in Part Five of *The Plague* and *Exile and the Kingdom*.

Chapter seven is an assessment of Camus's recovery and an exploration of the political implications of his project. It involves a close examination of what Camus kept in the symbols from the original traditions and what he purged. It assesses the

degree to which he stayed within the Greek or Judeo-Christian perspectives in an attempt to understand his unique amalgamation. What is Greek, What is Christian, and what is new? A discussion of the legitimacy of his reinvigoration concludes the dissertation. Did he achieve his aims? Did he violate the limits of "authentic" symbolizations? Was his recovery legitimate? Do others agree with his treatment? Does Camus demonstrate the significance of symbolic horizons? Are narratives and symbols a legitimate means of curbing nihilist tendencies? How does this perspective of Camus alter the traditional view of him as a political thinker? In short, chapter seven is an evaluation of Camus's inquiry.

Instead of defining man as **animal rational,**
we should define him as **animal symbolicum.**
By doing so we can designate his specific difference,
and we can begin to understand the new way open to man--
the way to civilization.
Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man.*

Chapter 2
Symbols and Stories

The relationship of myth and symbol to philosophy has always been problematic, sometimes paradoxical. Plato's well known dialogue with the poets is illustrative. While abandoning the poets for reason, Plato used myth and symbol, even narrative, to explore and explain the world of the good. Aristotle's taxonomic treatment of tragedy and elevation of reason and experience concluded the relegation of myth and symbol to the dark recesses of the irrational unconscious. Indeed, despite repeated attempts to rescue the poets from and for philosophy, it was not until the twentieth century that myth and symbol were reintegrated into serious philosophical discussion.

Symbols are evocative signs capable of illuminating human experiences, both individual and communal, and giving to those experiences meaning and significance. Necessarily ambiguous and containing elements of the nonrational, symbols act as mediations between the so-called empirical world and the world of imagination. They are not literal descriptions of empirical reality, nor are they simply flights of fancy. Symbols are both bound and free. This chapter explores and amplifies this generic notion of symbols by turning to the thought of the three thinkers of the twentieth century most responsible for the revival of interest in symbols and narrative, Ernst Cassirer, Eric Voegelin, and Paul Ricoeur. The intent, in doing so, is to lay a ground work for understanding Camus's use of symbol in his narratives.

Cassirer

In his three volume magnum opus, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Ernst Cassirer provided the groundwork for the contemporary appreciation of the power and significance of symbols. Cassirer argues that all knowledge--artistic, linguistic, mythic, cultural, and even scientific and mathematical--is mediated through symbols. The form or structure of symbols is not fixed but changes through time. Given this, and the fact that knowledge is shaped by the forms through which it is mediated, human perception also varies.[1] Cassirer's interest in "*The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* is not concerned exclusively or even primarily with the purely scientific, exact conceiving of the world; it is concerned with all the forms assumed by man's understanding of the world. It seeks to apprehend these forms in their diversity, in their tonality, and in the inner distinctiveness of their several expressions."[2] In its elevation of rationality, philosophy fails to take into account these diverse forms of human understanding. By ignoring that some humans perceive the world not through rational symbols but through mythic ones, modern philosophy has grossly misunderstood the nature of knowing, the importance of symbolic forms, and, ultimately, the human condition.

Cassirer's notion of symbols has its roots in Kant's transcendental schema. Kant, who did not intend "transcendental" to refer to a reality beyond all human experience but rather as a cognitive faculty or condition of human beings, states that by transcendental he

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[1]Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 3 vols., trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). A fourth, unfinished, volume of this work is an explication of the metaphysical implications of Cassirer's thought.

[2]*Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 13.

> by no means "higher." High towers and metaphysically great men resembling them, round both of which there is commonly much wind, are not for me. My place is the fruitful bathos of experience; and the word "transcendental," . . . does not signify something passing beyond all experience but something that indeed precedes it *a priori*, but that is intended simply to make knowledge of experience possible. If these conceptions overstep experience, their employment is termed "transcendent," which must be distinguished from the immanent use, that is, use restricted to [direct or sensory] experience.[3]

For Kant, transcendental means those aspects or conditions of human knowledge that exist but cannot be perceived through direct experience. Kant is not, as is often charged, demeaning direct experience. He agrees we have experiences and that they are crucial to understanding; but, Kant contends that certain conditions exist, prior to experience, that allow knowledge to happen. Charles W. Hendel phrases it this way in his introduction to volume one of Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*: "Even the content or material of knowledge as an element must be transcendental: it is only distinguishable as a moment or factor in the analysis of knowledge. Concretely we have appearances and experience, and in experience these elements and factors are already funded or, to use Kant's expression, they are `constitutive.'"[4] According to Kant, constitutive elements, or *a priori* conditions, can only be comprehended through transcendental deductions. Transcendental logic proposes to bridge the gap between form and content by revealing that form and content are, in fact, interwoven or already endowed with *a priori* structures. These *a priori* constituents are discerned by means of the transcendental schema. Kant asks: "Now it is clear that pure concepts of the

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[3]Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics*, a revision of the Carus translation, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1955), 122 n#2.

[4]Charles W. Hendel's Introduction to Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, v. I, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 11.

understanding, as compared with empirical or sensuous impressions in general, are entirely heterogeneous, and can never be met with in any intuition. How then can the latter be comprehended under the former. . .?"[5] He responds with the transcendental schema:

> In our case there must be some third thing homogeneous on the one side with the category, and on the other with the phenomenon, to render the application of the former to the latter. This intermediate representation must be pure (free from all that is empirical) and yet intelligible on the one side, and sensuous on the other. Such a representation is the transcendental schema.[6]

The transcendental schema, then, is the form through which the merger of the sensuous and the intellectual occurs; it allows for apprehension of the universal in the particular. In this way the schema is more than the concept or category, it is more adequate and more complete because it allows what neither form nor content can accomplish on their own. The schema is that which allows thought to occur. It is the *a priori* condition of experience.[7]

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[5]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. F. Max Muller (New York: Dolphin Books, 1961), p. 104.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 105.

[7]It is interesting to note that Kant is undergoing something of a revival. One of the most intriguing reevaluations is John Michael Krois. Krois stresses Cohen's contributions to Kantian scholarship as the key to Cassirer's symbols. He believes that Cohen's particular interpretation of Kantian transcendentals opens the way to a different form of questioning. More specifically, by restricting Kant's "transcendental" to involve only the "possibility" of the *a priori*, Cohen focused attention not on "what" questions but on "how." This move alters the way Kantians ask questions and it "eliminates all the static givens in Kant's philosophy." Krois claims that this leads to a "type of philosophy conceived in the same spirit as Husserl's phenomenology." John Michael Krois *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 40-41.

The transcendental schema had enormous influence on Cassirer. Hendel remarks that "[t]he schema's the thing that caught the imagination of Cassirer. . . . [and] he might well have presented his own philosophy as an extension of the doctrine of Schema, for it is clearly a stage in his thinking toward the concept of `symbolic form.'"[8] Cassirer admires the potency of the schema and intends by his symbolic forms a similar synthetic function. However, whereas Kant maintains that the transcendental schema is achieved by means of analysis and logic, Cassirer tries to find synthesis through symbols themselves. Donald Verene states: "Kant reaches this notion of a schema through a process of making distinctions within his transcendental analysis of the elements of experience. Cassirer wishes to find this schema in experience as a phenomenon. He does so in his discovery of the symbol as the medium through which all knowledge and culture occur."[9] Ultimately, Cassirer maintains that Kant's solution suffers from a similar malady plaguing much of philosophy; it approaches man backwards. If the synthesis of form and content is only possible by means of analysis, through logical deduction, then human beings who exist prior to the development of rational thought would be incapable of perceiving synthesis. For the transcendental schema, as a mode or condition, to be the only way to achieve synthesis is, for Cassirer, an untenable position. For Cassirer, the site of the unity must occur in something that is phenomenally present--the symbol.

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[8]Hendel's introduction to Cassirer's, *PSF*, v. I, pp. 14-15.

[9]Donald Phillip Verene, "Metaphysical Narration, Science, and Symbolic Form," *The Review of Metaphysics*, v. 47, 1993, p. 116.

Verene observes that: "Cassirer understands his philosophy as an idealism that he, in fact, traces back to the problem of form in Plato, but he insists that the object of which he speaks is truly `there.' It is not a creation of the mind of the knower."[10] Cassirer redresses this seemingly paradoxical position through his notion of *symbolic pregnance*. Symbolic pregnance is the idea that a perceptual object can be both "there" and "not there," and it can be traced back to the organicism of Leibniz and his *praegnens futuri*. Since Leibniz, "the concept of the whole has gained a different and deeper significance. For the universal whole which is to be grasped can no longer be reduced to a mere sum of its parts. The new whole is organic, not mechanical; its nature . . . is presupposed by its parts and constitutes the condition of the possibility of their nature and being."[11] John Michael Krois points out that much is lost in the translation of the term. The term *pragnanz* "derives both from the German *pragen* (to mint or coin and give a sharp contour) and the Latin *praegnens* (laden or ready to give birth)."[12] Symbolic pregnance, then, is intended to describe events that both give form, shape and order, but also provide for productivity. Cassirer states:

> By symbolic pregnance we mean the way in which a perception as a sensory experience contains at the same time a certain nonintuitive meaning which it immediately and concretely represents. Here we are not dealing with bare perceptive data, on which some sort of apperceptive acts are later grafted, through which they are interpreted, judged, transformed. Rather, it is the perception itself which by virtue of its own immanent organization, takes on a kind of spiritual articulation--

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[10]*Ibid.*, p. 116.

[11]Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. F.C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 31.

[12]John Michael Krois, *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 53.

> which, being ordered in itself, also belongs to a determinate order of meaning. In its full actuality, its living totality, it is at the same time a life "in" meaning. It is not only subsequently received into this sphere but is, one might say, born into it. It is this ideal interwovenness, this relatedness of the single perceptive phenomenon, given here and now, to a characteristic total meaning that the term "pregnance" is meant to designate.[13]

Thus, the advantages of symbols over transcendental schemas are that they exist phenomenally and are accessible to emotional as well as rational deductions. In other words, symbols can account for pre-rational mediation whereas transcendental schemas cannot.

Ultimately, Cassirer's reappraisal of pre-rational forms of understanding alters his philosophic project. In volume three of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer admits that his initial plans, as derived from Kant and the transcendental schema, had to be abandoned. He states:

> I started from the assumption that the basic and constitutive law of knowledge can most clearly be demonstrated where knowledge has reached its highest level of necessity and universality . . . in the foundations of mathematical-physical objectivity [but]. . . . Both in content and in method, the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* has gone beyond this initial formulation of the problem. It has broadened the concept of theory itself by striving to show that there are formative factors of a truly theoretical kind which govern the shaping not only of the scientific world view but also of the natural world view implicit in perception and intuition. And finally, the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* was driven even beyond the natural world view of experience and observation, when the mythical world disclosed relationships which, though not reducible to the laws of empirical thinking, are by no means without their laws, and reveal a structure of specific and independent character.[14]

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[13]Cassirer, *PSF*, vol. III, p. 202.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 1.

Finding Kant too formalistic, Cassirer turned to Hegel for a "phenomenology of knowledge." Stressing that he intends phenomenology not in the Husserlian sense but in Hegel's, he states:

> For Hegel, phenomenology became the basis of all philosophical knowledge, since he insisted that philosophical knowledge must encompass the totality of cultural forms and since in his view this totality can be made visible only in the transitions from one form to another. The truth is the whole--yet the whole cannot be presented all at once but must be unfolded progressively by thought in its own autonomous movement and rhythm.[15]

Hegel's phenomenology becomes Cassirer's binding thread. Mirroring *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Cassirer describes and relates the progressive unfolding of symbolic forms to three basic functions of consciousness: (1) expressive; (2) representational; and (3) conceptional or significative.

The expressive stage of consciousness describes the level where the symbol and the object are united. At this stage, no genuine distinction is made between the symbol and the object. Cassirer states: "Here the phenomenon as it is given in any moment never has a character of mere representation, it is one of authentic presence: here a reality is not "actualized" through the mediation of the phenomenon but is present in full actuality in the phenomenon."[16] This unity means that in the mythic world, where expressive consciousness is dominant, "every phenomenon is always and essentially an incarnation."[17] Objects are not thought or analyzed, rather they are experienced as forces, either of good or ill, and the perception of any particular symbol is an emotional

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

experience. Cassirer remarks that "[w]hen water is sprinkled in rain magic, it does not serve as a mere symbol or analogue of the "real" rain; it is attached to the real rain by the bond of an original sympathy. The demon of the rain is tangibly and corporeally alive and present in every drop of water."[18] This early stage of consciousness, where every symbol denotes a vital force or agent, reveals a world drenched in feeling and strong emotional responses.

The representational function of consciousness is when the object becomes separated from the subject. The object comes to be perceived as wholly other or discrete and, as such, "a fundamentally new relation between subject and object [comes] into being."[19] The effect is that "[o]nly now do the objects [that] hitherto acted directly on the emotions . . . begin in a sense to recede into the distance: into a distance where they can be `looked at,' `intuited,' in which they can be actualized in their spatial outlines and independent qualitative determinations."[20] This level of consciousness, which enables the categorization of once disparate objects into various logical

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[18]*Ibid.*, p. 68.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 113. It should be noted that Cassirer points to the well known story of Hellen Keller's experience at the water pump, as related by her teacher Anne Mansfield Sullivan, as an example of this sort of transition. The story is as follows: "We went out to the pump-house, and I made Helen hold her mug under the spout while I pumped. As the cold water gushed forth, filling the mug, I spelled `w-a-t-e-r' in Helen's free hand. The word coming so close upon the sensation of cold water rushing over her hand seemed to startle her. She dropped the mug and stood transfixed. A new light came into her face. She spelled `water' several times. Then she dropped on the ground and asked for its name and pointed to the pump and the trellis, and turning round she asked for my name. . . . [Keller] added thirty new words to her vocabulary." Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life*, (New York: Doubleday, 1903), p. 316.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 113.

classifications, opens the way to increasing understanding and manipulation of the natural world.

The third phase of consciousness is the conceptual or the significative function. Here separation is overcome as the object comes to be known as a construction of the symbol. It is at this level that the knower can freely construct systems of symbols or, as Cassirer contends, this is the "transition to the realm of pure meaning."[21] Verene describes this phase as "[h]ere the thought of the knower constructs worlds of pure meaning that have their own coherence of form, and which the modelling, empirical, and experimental activities of science find loci in experience and provide consciousness with a formal articulation of what is there."[22] The ability to signify exists in all three levels of consciousness, but at the conceptual stage this power achieves a new height and purpose. Cassirer states that

> [y]et it is within the sphere of pure meaning that this function not only increases in scope but first clearly discloses its specific direction. Now there develops a kind of detachment, of abstraction that was unknown to perception and intuition. Knowledge releases the pure relations from their involvement with the concrete and individually determined reality of things, in order to represent them purely as such in the universality of their form, in their relational character. It is not sufficient to construe being itself in the various directions of relational thinking, for knowledge also demands and creates a universal system of measurement for the procedure itself. As theoretical thinking progresses, this system is more and more firmly grounded and is made more and more inclusive. . . . All concept formation, regardless of the special problem with which it may start, is ultimately oriented toward one fundamental goal, toward determination of the "absolute truth." Ultimately thought seeks to fit all

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[21]*Ibid.*, p. 284.

[22]Donald Phillip Verene, "Metaphysical Narration, Science, and Symbolic Form," *The Review of Metaphysics*, v. 47, 1993, p. 117.

> particular propositions, all particular conceptual structures into a unitary and all-inclusive context.[23]

Such statements reveal Cassirer's proximity to Hegel; his phenomenology is virtually identical. The expressive stage mirrors Consciousness; the representational stage mirrors Self-Consciousness; and the conceptual mirrors Mind.[24]

By adopting a phenomenology of knowledge which takes stock of the various stages of symbolic representation, Cassirer hoped to gain a more thorough understanding of not just human knowledge but of the human condition itself. Philosophy's captivity to rationality led to a failed assessment of human beings. Making "rationality" the defining characteristic of human existence, the *differentia specifica*, is, for Cassirer, a genealogical mistake of enormous magnitude; it is *the* mistake in philosophy because it necessarily obscures authentic modes of human understanding and perception. In short, the human condition will remain elusive if we continue to cast human identity in terms of rationality. Cassirer contends that "instead

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[23]Cassirer, *PSF*, vol. III, p. 284.

[24]Despite the obvious affinities, there are important differences. First, Cassirer contends that Hegel's phenomenology does not go far enough back. Hegel's initial stage, Consciousness, consists of sensations and perceptions and Cassirer believes that those functions are later developments--humans originally confront the world in emotional terms. The two agree that in the earliest stage human perception does not differentiate subject and object, but Cassirer argues that the notion of sensations and perceptions are transitional developments or steps on the way to the representational stage; one can see the shadow of rationality in such analytical functions as sensation and perception.

But the most significant distinction between Cassirer and Hegel concerns the degree of finality or completion within their respective progressive systems. Verene states: "Cassirer's phenomenology, unlike Hegel's, does not *terminate* in a stage of philosophical knowledge." (Donald Verene, "Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer: The Origins of the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms," *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, v. 30, 1969, p. 39. (Emphasis added).

of defining man as an *animal rationale*, we should define him as an *animal symbolicum*. By doing so we can designate his specific difference, and we can understand the new way open to man--the way to civilization."[25] Only by recognizing the truly unique capacity of humans--the ability to generate symbols--can philosophy begin to understand human beings and human existence. Language, myth, art, even science and mathematics are not distinct ways of knowing but simply different modes of symbolic expression, different symbolic forms. All knowledge is mediated by and through symbolic expression. Thus, for Cassirer, the study of symbols is not a sub-field of philosophy but its proper subject and substance.

Voegelin

Voegelin's interest in symbols is grounded in his disaffection with modernity in general and positivism in particular. Deeply concerned with the political implications of modern conceptions of reason and science, Voegelin turned to the history of political ideas in order to recover a suitable science of politics and theory of man. As Voegelin writes:

> The "History of Political Ideas" had started from the conventional assumptions that there are ideas, that they have a history, and that a "History of Political Ideas" would have to work its way from Classical politics up to the present. Under these assumptions, I had humbly worked through the materials, and a manuscript of several thousand pages was in existence.
>
> Still, the various misgivings that had arisen in the course of the work now crystallized into the understanding that a "History of Political Ideas" was a senseless undertaking. . . . Ideas turned out to be a secondary conceptual development, beginning with the Stoics, intensified in the High Middle Ages, and radically unfolding into concepts which are assumed to refer to a reality other than the reality

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[25]Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 26.

> experienced. And this reality other than the reality experienced does not exist. Hence, ideas are liable to deform the truth of the experiences and their symbolization. . . . The interest, thus, moved from ideas to the experiences of reality that engendered a variety of symbols for their articulation. . . . I had to give up the "ideas" as objects of a history and to establish the experiences as the reality to be explored historically. These experiences, however, one could explore only by exploring their articulation through symbols. The identification of the subject matter and, with the subject matter of the method to be used in its exploration led to the principle that lies at the basis of all my later work: i.e., the reality of experience is self-interpretive. The men who have the experiences express them through symbols; and the symbols are the key to the understanding of the experience expressed.[26]

This statement reveals both Voegelin's increasing wariness of contemporary language and his belief that symbols are superior to ideas or concepts. Symbols maintain connection to the experiences that engender them, whereas ideas either are, or easily become, detached from experience and hence have the tendency to be perceived as constituting a reality of their own. This proclivity toward abstraction and misplaced concreteness is one of the major elements of modernity's derailment; it leads not only to the reductionist fallacy preeminent in the modern sciences, but, ultimately, to the truncation of being. Lured into the false belief that ideas or concepts are the reality to be studied, most social scientists fail in their analyses of human existence because they do not take into account the full range of human experience.

Like Cassirer, Voegelin argues that human beings are symbolic creatures. Although Voegelin is primarily interested in the representative historical expressions of experience, he recognized that it is through symbols that these expressions are manifest

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[26]Eric Voegelin, "Autobiographical Memoir," as quoted by Ellis Sandoz in *The Voegelinian Revolution*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 80-81.

and understood. Thus, history is an accounting of the experience-symbolizations of human beings. Voegelin states:

> The existence of man in political society is historical existence; and a theory of politics, if it penetrates to principles, must at the same time be a theory of history. The following lectures on the central problem of a theory of politics, on representation, will, therefore, carry the inquiry beyond a description of the conventionally so-called representative institutions into the nature of representation as the form by which a political society gains existence for action in history. Moreover, the analysis will not stop at this point but will proceed to an exploration of the symbols by which political societies interpret themselves as representatives of a transcendent truth.[27]

But what actually constitutes a political society? Ellis Sandoz describes the "what" of Voegelin's studies as "social reality." The careful selection of such terms as "political societies" and "social reality" are efforts at avoiding objectification. What must be understood is that "social reality is not an object in nature to be studied by the theorist merely externally. Each society, Voegelin suggests, possesses not only externality but also an internal dimension of meaningfulness through which the human beings who inhabit it interpret existence to themselves."[28] The symbols to be studied, then, are those that express both the internal and external dimensions of existence.

> The self-illumination of society through symbols is an integral part of social reality, and one may even say its essential part, for through such symbolization the members of a society experience it as more than an accident or a convenience; they experience it as of their human essence. And, inversely, the symbols express the experience that man is fully man

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[27]Eric Voegelin. *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 1.

[28]Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1981), p. 93.

> by virtue of his participation in a whole which transcends his particular existence."[29]

In short, truly representative political symbolizations exemplify the existential and historical aspects of both the individual and the community. Symbols are engendered from the experiences of the individuals who make up a particular community, but the community is not simply the aggregation of disparate experiences. Representative political symbols reflect not just individuals but also constitute something more grand--a whole, a little world or a cosmion. Individuals come to understand that they are not fully human unless they participate in "a whole which transcends [their] particular existence." This process of self-illumination through symbols is not the exception but the rule: "every human society has an understanding of itself through a variety of symbols."[30] In addition, the study of symbols reveals certain shared experiences concerning the nature of reality and the structure of order. These experiences are not identical, but they are similar enough to be called equivalent.[31] These equivalent experiences are the political fundamentals for which Voegelin was searching; and this is

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[29]*Ibid.*, p. 27.

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 28.

[31]Voegelin points out, in his excellent essay, "The Equivalences of Experience and Symbolizations in History," that the urge to find identical experiences is a modern fallacy. You cannot expect to find the same level of concreteness when studying experiences that you can when studying the natural sciences. A simple adherence to Aristotle's methodological pluralism, he contends, would go a long way in dissolving many of the ills of modernity. The equivalences essay is included in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, vol. XII, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 115.

what he means by his statement that "[t]he order of history emerges from the history of order."[32]

What complicates the inquiry is the fact that while the act of representative symbolization is universal, the manner and/or form in which this self-illumination takes place is not. There are, in Voegelin's eyes, various degrees of compact and differentiated symbolizations scattered throughout time and space, and the symbolizations themselves play a role in how reality is experienced. In other words, the relationship between experience and symbolization is interdependent. One cannot journey back to the *arche*, to experience a reality prior to any symbolizations; that is a modern flight of fancy. The beginning is just as mysterious as the end.[33] Nor can it be said that experiences precede symbols or vice versa; all that can be known is that they exist in an integral and symbiotic relationship. Symbols and experiences are continually being rearticulated in light of one another, and this is precisely what Voegelin's five volume *magnum opus*, *Order and History*, was designed to explore.

Voegelin argues that within any social reality there are two sets of symbolizations of order: the symbols commonly accepted by the general populace and the symbols of political science. Utilizing Heraclitean language, Voegelin describes the former symbols as the *xynon*; and while these can be highly differentiated language symbols, they are not the symbols of political science. The latter are only generated

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[32]Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. I, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1956), p. ix.

[33]For Voegelin's discussion concerning the inability to know the *arche* see his introduction to *Order and History: The Ecumenic Age*, vol. IV, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), especially the section entitled "The Beginning and The Beyond," pp. 7-11.

when the commonly accepted symbols are taken by philosophers or artists who "order and clarify the meanings by the criteria of [their] theory."[34] While Voegelin's interest centers on the symbols of political science, he is not dismissive of the *xynon*. The fact that philosophers and political scientists do not theorize upon a world devoid of symbolizations of order, but extract the best and most pertinent symbols that have already been articulated by the community, and then attempt to clarify them by inserting them into more differentiated symbols, is itself a crucial realization. Science and philosophy are not free to conjure new and abstract theories upon an imaginary *tabula rasa*, but confront this world and all its problems amidst a host of already articulated experience-symbolizations. In other words, the philosopher is part of the process; there is no Archimedean point outside the flux of existence and distinct from human experiences from which to theorize. This does not mean that previously accepted symbols always maintain their representative character. Personal and historical experience reveals that commonly accepted symbols occasionally lose resonance. When this is the case, "new" symbolizations emerge. Sometimes these moments are pivotal, and entirely new orientations are required. This occurs when the traditional symbols of order have degenerated to a state where the people have lost faith in them. The only recourse, then, is for the generation of symbols that constitute an enormous change in perception, or a "leap in being" in Voegelin's words. Such innovations are similar to Kuhn's paradigm shifts in that they alter the way virtually everything is perceived; afterwards, the world is understood in very different terms. For example, instead of the world being flat, or populated by multi-deities, the world is

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[34]Voegelin, *NSP*, p. 28.

round and governed by one god. Most of the time, new symbolizations are not so radical but merely reclarifications--alterations, to be sure--within the same "mode" of being.

The creation of "new" symbols as well as the clarification of old symbols takes place within the collective consciousness of a community. Both creative acts are rearticulations; and both are motivated by the hope of restoring vitality to the ordering symbols of a society. Voegelin argues that these acts of reinvigoration are essential to the health of symbols and social reality. However, he contends that there are legitimate and illegitimate rearticulations, and proposes to provide the tools to discern which ones are authentic and which ones are not.

Voegelin asserts that the overwhelming majority of symbolizations of order share certain characteristics. They reveal a quaternarian structure to existence. The vast majority of symbolizations of order, at least until the deformations of modernity, include four fundamental elements: man, society, world, and god. While the depiction of and relations between these realms has differed, these dimensions of existence are predominant in symbols of order. Additionally, Voegelin asserts that it is not enough that these elements simply be present. What is crucial to legitimate symbolizations is that *human beings assume the proper role or place within the hierarchy of being.* Man, perhaps best represented by Aristotle as neither beast nor god, exists in the In-Between or *metaxy.* In other words, humans are part of this world while at the same time they transcend it. The tremendous benefit of symbols is, that by their very form, they are illustrative of this condition. While preserving a connection to experience, symbols, nevertheless, transcend this world. They embody elements of human experience, such

as history, that are both of and not of this world. In this way, symbols both display a fecundity that is analogous to abstract ideas and concepts, yet, are always limited in that they are bound by human experience. In effect, symbols represent or articulate the In-Between character of human existence. They mirror human creativity and potential in that they are both bound and free. Voegelin's new science explored the trail of symbolizations throughout history and revealed that there are ontological criteria to legitimate symbolizations of order. In this way Voegelin not only explored the history of symbols of order, but also revealed a method to diagnose modern political, social, cultural, and even theological afflictions. This is his well known conception of gnosticism.

In order to diagnose modernity, Voegelin first had to understand the previous experiences of order. The earliest symbols unearthed reveal experiences of human beings to be one of integral participation; humans understood their identity, individual as well as social, as an undifferentiated part of the great stream of being. It was an experience of oneness, where "[t]he community of being is experienced with such intimacy that the consubstantiality of the partners will override the separateness of substances."[35] This experience of unity with being is represented through symbols that are cosmological in form. "[B]y letting [the] vegetative rhythms and celestial revolutions function as models for the structural and procedural order of society," political order is an attempt at *mimesis.*[36] Voegelin examines various cosmological

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[35]Voegelin, *O & H*, vol I, p. 3.

[36]*Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 6.

societies of the Near East as examples of this primordial form of political representation, but examples exist on every continent.

Despite the monumental efforts of cosmological societies to integrate the rituals of their societies into perfect harmony with the cycles of the seasons and the planets, periods of disintegration inevitably occurred. Whether the causes were natural disasters, pressure from neighboring civilizations or a combination, periods of disorder emerged. As disaster overwhelmed the cosmological empires, the efficacy and legitimacy of cosmological symbols were called into question. Such skepticism is to be expected. After all, any rearticulation begins first with profound doubt. When "cosmologically symbolized empires break down and in their disaster engulf the trust in cosmic order. . . . [I]f the cosmos is not the source of lasting order in human existence, [then] where is the source of order to be found?"[37] This was the question to be answered.

The dissatisfaction with the cosmos as the ground or foundation for political order prompted a reorientation, a turn to something that is "more lasting than the visibly existing world--that is, toward the invisibly existing being beyond all being in tangible existence."[38] This longing for a more reliable foundation, for an invisible divine being that is not subject to the whims and chaos of the natural world, was the impetus for change. This longing, in time, induced a "shift toward macroanthropic symbolization

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[37] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 6.

[38] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 6.

[which] becomes manifest in the differentiation of philosophy and religion out of the preceding, more compact forms of symbolization."[39]

This shift, from cosmological symbolizations of order to symbols of divine and unseen macroanthropic symbols, initiated a differentiation in human consciousness. Coming to recognize that humans are, in large part, separate and distinct from other aspects of being, compact symbolizations of order, where man is not seen as distinct from society, the natural world, or the cosmos, were replaced by more differentiated symbols. In other words, the quaternarian structure of existence became more explicit, more distinct. Now, and this is crucial for Voegelin, the actual structure of existence remains unchanged. What differentiates is not reality but human consciousness. The radical new truths must not "obscure the fact that the differentiation of existential truth does not abolish the cosmos in which the events occur."[40] Reality is unaltered. The only difference is that human consciousness no longer perceives existence as undifferentiated but rather as a series of distinct realms. In traditional philosophical language, individuals become self-conscious and realize their separateness, their distinctiveness.

In the first three volumes of *Order and History*, Voegelin is guided by the assumption that a line of development can be deduced. Given this initial assumption *Order and History* was originally to be a six volume set: *Israel and Revelation*; *The World of the Polis*; *Plato and Aristotle*; *Empire and Christianity*; *The Protestant Centuries*; and *The Crisis of Western Civilization*. Such a conception does not differ

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[39]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

[40]Voegelin, *O & H*, vol. IV, p. 8-9.

from Cassirer in that symbolic forms develop along a linear pattern and each transition is also accompanied by a shift in human consciousness and perception. For Cassirer, however, the ability of humans to manipulate symbols in an abstract environment is a positive achievement; indeed, it is this ability which has allowed humans to make such tremendous advances in the natural sciences. Voegelin agrees that the development of symbolic representation prompted the discoveries of the natural sciences, but counters that it also led to severe deformations. The ability to generate abstract symbols, inherent in the natural sciences as well as the emulations of the social sciences, led to the persistent problems of misplaced concreteness and a tendency toward reductionism. Such dispositions deny important facets of human experience as mere subjectivism, attempt to truncate being, and, eventually result in overblown beliefs concerning human potentiality. These mistakes are easy to make. Indeed, Voegelin himself fell prey to a form of misplaced concreteness with, in the first three volumes of *Order and History*, his emphasis on a progressive, linear development of history. This is yet another pernicious modern fallacy which reveals a "monomaniacal desire to force the operations of the spirit in history on the one line that will unequivocally lead to the speculator's present."[41] As Voegelin's examination expanded to the full range of sources available, he noticed an ecumenic character of symbols. Symbolizations of order could not be reduced to a single line of development, with Greece and Israel earmarked as the most influential sites of differentiation because "[t]he process of history, and such order as can be discerned in it, is not a story to be told from beginning to its happy, or unhappy,

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[41]Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, p. 3.

end; it is a mystery in process of revelation."[42] Additionally, and contrary to his original conception, the gnostic tendencies that were at the heart of the ideological movements of the twentieth century could not be traced simply to ill conceived products of differentiated human consciousness as achieved by the Greeks and Hebrews. Gnostic tendencies were also apparent in the earlier forms of representation, the cosmological experience-symbolizations. Voegelin explains:

> When I devised the program I was still laboring under the conventional belief that the conception of history as a meaningful course of events on a straight line of time was the great achievement of Israelites and Christians who were favored in its creation by the revelatory events, while the pagans, deprived as they were of revelation, could never rise above the conception of a cyclical time. This conventional belief had to be abandoned when I discovered the unilinear construction of history, from a divine-cosmic origin of order to the author's present, to be a symbolic form developed by the end of the third millennium B.C. in the empires of the Ancient Near East. To this form I gave the name historiogenesis.
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> The discovery disturbed the program seriously. There was more at stake than a conventional assumption now disproved. For the very unilinear history which I had supposed to be engendered, together with the punctuation of meaning on it, by the differentiating events, turned out to be a cosmological symbolism.[43]

This new conception of history forced Voegelin to consider seriously such questions as "was there perhaps something of a `leap in being' in the foundation of empire? and inversely, was there perhaps something imperial about spiritual outbursts?"[44] Such questions challenge both the western preoccupation with the Greek and Judeo-Christian experiences as well as Voegelin's analysis concerning the roots of

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[42]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

[44]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

the modern political malaise. Given Voegelin's new conception of history, the tendency toward gnosticism could not be characterized as coterminous with differentiated symbolisms. He states: "Above all, the anti-cosmism of the Gnostic movement is not a deformation of Christianity, for the Gnostic distortion of reality through the contraction of divine order into the Beyond of consciousness precedes the Christian pneumatic differentiation."[45] Voegelin eventually concluded that while differentiated symbolizations of order are more likely to result in gnostic movements, there appears to be a universal human tendency to totalize experience. At the root of this tendency is the human desire to escape the uncertainty of existence. Camus also identified this longing and called it a metaphysical need for unity.[46] Legitimate rearticulations of experience-symbolization maintain an openness to the full range of human experience. They do not artificially truncate the realm of being for some dogmatic purpose; and they do insist on a sense of limits. Thus, symbols of order can be generated or rearticulated that both ground the political order but do not absolve chaos. The mystery remains. Indeed, the clearest sign that a symbol is deformed is if it claims to resolve the mystery. Symbols, if they are sensitive to the limits of human knowledge, always maintain an awareness of mystery. Further, it is impossible, or at least untenable, to

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[45]*Ibid.*, p. 23.

[46]It should be noted Voegelin's reassessment was not total. While the roots of gnosticism can be traced back to cosmological symbolizations, more differentiated symbolizations of order, such as Greek philosophy and Christian theology, have a greater likelihood of inspiring gnosticism. In short, greater differentiation increases the likelihood of a loss of balance. See in particular Eric Voegelin, *Order and History: The Ecumenic Age*, vol. IV, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), pp. 20 - 27.

assert a single unassailable interpretation of a symbol or myth. Their very form ensures ambiguity and preserves contingency.

Symbols only maintain their efficacy if they are continually reinvigorated by sensitive participants; they must be perpetually revisited. And because individuals always bring with them specific concerns and dilemmas endemic to their time period, the symbolic horizon is always in a state of flux; it changes with the concerns of the times. For example, the symbolization of exile as articulated by Camus will differ from exile as articulated by the ancient Hebrews. While ideas, theories or concepts are not excluded from this sort of updating, the inherent ambiguity of symbols makes renewal of this sort easier. This ability to adjust more readily to the times is a crucial advantage.

Ricoeur

Whereas Cassirer reawakens attention to the efficacy of symbols and Voegelin illuminates the relationship between experience and symbolization, Ricoeur explores more fully the interpretative dimensions of symbols. Ricoeur describes his philosophical project as an attempt to meld three distinct philosophical traditions. He states: "it stands in the line of a reflexive[47] philosophy; it remains within the sphere of Husserlian phenomenology; it strives to be a hermeneutical variation of this phenomenology."[48] While the traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology are clear--as least to their origins and primary authors--the reflexive tradition is ambiguous.

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[47]The translators note that in French the adjective *reflexive* incorporates two meanings which are delineated in English by reflective and reflexive. Both meanings should be kept in mind.

[48]Paul Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), p. 12.

Realizing this, Ricoeur explicitly discusses what he means by "reflexive" philosophy. He states:

> A reflexive philosophy considers the most radical philosophical problems to be those that concern the possibility of self-understanding as the subject of the operations of knowing, willing, evaluating, and so on. Reflexion is that act of turning back upon itself by which a subject grasps, in a moment of intellectual clarity and moral responsibility, the unifying principle of the operations among which it is dispersed and forgets itself as subject.[49]

Ricoeur's association with the reflexive tradition, with which he identifies Descartes, Kant and French post-Kantian thought, is limited. Gabriel Marcel, it appears, taught Ricoeur "a profound respect for the mystery of being," and this in turn fostered "a deep distrust for any simple reductive explanation of man or culture."[50] He wondered:

> But how can the "I think" know or recognize itself? It is here that phenomenology--and more especially hermeneutics--represent both a realization and a radical transformation of the very program of reflexive philosophy. Indeed, the idea of reflexion carries with it the desire for absolute transparence, a perfect coincidence of the self with itself, which would make consciousness of self indubitable knowledge and, as such, more fundamental than all forms of positive knowledge. It is this fundamental demand that phenomenology first of all, and then hermeneutics, continue to project onto an ever more distant horizon as philosophy goes on providing itself with the instruments of thought capable of satisfying it.[51]

Ricoeur's work, then, is an attempt to fulfill the reflexive tradition's goal--that of disclosing the self--by relying upon the newest philosophical "instruments." Yet his

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[49]*Ibid.*, p. 12.

[50]Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 8.

[51]Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," pp. 12-13.

work was tempered by a deep respect for the mystery of being. However, as the above quotation demonstrates, Ricoeur's dissatisfaction with the reflexive tradition does not stem simply from a respect for the mystery of being. Ricoeur realized that the reflexive tradition was complicated by the emergence of certain contemporary philosophical techniques, such as phenomenology and hermeneutics. From divergent beginnings, these two disciplines reveal that disclosure of identity is a much more complicated affair than the reflexive tradition implied. With regard to phenomenology, Ricoeur states: "The great discovery of phenomenology, within the limits of the phenomenological reduction itself, remains intentionality, that is to say, in its least technical sense, the priority of the consciousness of something over self-consciousness."[52] Phenomenology reveals the status of human existence to be one of integral participation. Self-conscious beings are not always self-conscious but frequently perceive the world through conscious or even unconscious perspectives. Responding to this, phenomenology takes the inattentive as well as the attentive into account in an effort to offer a more conclusive perspective of human consciousness. However, a more descriptive and accurate account of human consciousness is not phenomenology's actual goal; its ultimate aim, asserts Ricoeur, is the truly transparent self. He states that "Husserl, in those of his theoretical texts most evidently marked by an idealism reminiscent of Fichte, conceives of phenomenology not only as a method of description, in terms of their essences, of the fundamental modes of organizing

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[52]*Ibid.*, p. 13.

experience . . . but also as a radical self-grounding in the most complex intellectual clarity."[53] However, Husserl and phenomenology never achieve this clarity because

> the concrete work of phenomenology, in particular in the studies devoted to the constitution of "things," reveals--by way of regression--levels, always more and more fundamental, at which the active syntheses continually refer to ever more radical passive syntheses. Phenomenology is thus caught up in an infinite movement of "backward questioning" in which its project of radical self-grounding fades away.[54]

The phenomenological search for foundations, in the end, discredits foundations, and "it is this that gives to Husserl's work its tragic grandeur."[55]

Ricoeur attempts to remedy this situation by combining phenomenology and hermeneutics. He asserts that modern hermeneutics, albeit by analyzing texts instead of consciousness, is driven by the same overriding goal as phenomenology: the disclosure of the authentic self. Expanding from biblical exegesis to the analysis of classical, juridical, and literary works, hermeneutics gradually broadened its scope from an analysis of specific texts or genres to an exposition of "what it is to understand" or *Verstehen*. This new focus--one that Ricoeur feels had the significance of a "Copernican reversal"--leads hermeneutics to inquiries concerning "the relation between sense and self, between the intelligibility of the first and the reflexive nature of the second."[56] However, interpreting a text, any text, is not a simple affair. Upon close examination, it is not possible to say that the text "originates" or is "created" by the

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[53]*Ibid.*, p. 13. (Emphasis added).

[54]Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," p. 15.

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 14.

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 14.

author; and, it is equally incorrect to say that a text "originates" or is "created" by the reader. Hermeneutics shows that reader, writer, and text are inextricably linked to one another. A full appreciation of a text must take into account the interrelations of these various entities. In short, hermeneutics reveals that textual existence is, like human existence, one of participation. Thus, both phenomenology and hermeneutics present similar findings about human beings and their relations to the world. Just as phenomenology reveals that the pursuit of a self existing in unobstructed self-consciousness--escaping all passive syntheses--is an endless and ultimately fruitless endeavor, the hermeneutical analysis of texts and their relation to authors and readers results in logical circles of a similar character.

Ricoeur's position is that both phenomenology and hermeneutics fail to realize their initial goal--attaining the immediate and direct correlation between sense and self--because they do not realize that human participation is not a development but is always presupposed. There can be no Archimedean point outside the flow to begin from. He states: "It is because we find ourselves first of all in world to which we belong and in which we cannot but participate that we are then able, in a second movement, to set up objects in opposition to ourselves, objects that we claim to constitute and master intellectually."[57] *Verstehen*, whether in the realm of phenomenology or hermeneutics, has, as Heidegger pointed out, an ontological signification. Acts of interpretation or awareness of self are secondary developments; presupposed by the condition of participation, they are responses to the human condition. Ricoeur states:

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[57]*Ibid.*, p. 14.

> *Verstehen* . . . is the response of a being thrown into the world who finds his way about in it by projecting onto it his ownmost possibilities. Interpretation, in the technical sense of the interpretation of texts, is but the development, the making explicit of this ontological understanding, an understanding always inseparable from a being that has initially been thrown into this world."[58]

In epistemological terms, the self cannot disclose itself immediately to itself but has to first take into account its preconditions. This is precisely what Heidegger attempts to do in *Being in Time* and Ricoeur greatly admires his contributions. However, Ricoeur criticizes Heidegger for trying to comprehend authentic human existence too directly. Instead, Ricoeur focuses on interpretation as the response human beings have once they realize their ontological status--they set out to interpret the world or project their possibilities. Heidegger dismisses such activities as ontic, and therefore not the target of his inquiries, and proceeds to investigate Dasein at its most fundamental levels. Ricoeur counters that hermeneutics and phenomenology teach that such quick and direct paths to unity are impossible. One cannot simply return to an authentic experience of ontology but must first wade through the various "projections" of human beings. This is referred to as Ricoeur's "long way" to being as opposed to Heidegger's "short way." The significant "justification of the long way over the short way to ontology [involves] the[ir] underlying differences in the fore-comprehension of human being. For Ricoeur, the unity of man can only be a regulative idea, not achieved in existence and not easily accessible to an ontology worked out too quickly."[59] Unity

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[58]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

[59]Patrick Bourgeois and Frank Schalow, "Hermeneutics of Existence: Conflict and Resolution," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 31, Spring, 1987, p. 46. (Emphasis added).

of sense and self, complete understanding, is never achievable. It provides the impetus for the philosophic search, but its actual attainment is beyond human possibility.

Ricoeur does not simply assert a telos. He contends that by combining phenomenology and hermeneutics into a critical method, it is possible to gain insight into being, to glimpse unity. In Voegelinian language, by participating in the search for being, the orientation or direction of the search is disclosed. For Ricoeur, the only path to this insight, however, is through an hermeneutical phenomenology. He states: "Moreover, it is only in a conflict of rival hermeneutics that we perceive something of the being to be interpreted."[60] For Ricoeur, the only way to disclose an unbiased interpretation, or genuine Verstehen, is by taking stock of rival interpretations. One must dwell in the ontic and search for the ontological.

Ricoeur, like Cassirer and Voegelin, argues that access to human experience is never direct but always mediated. He states: "Mediation [occurs] by signs: that is to say, it is language that is the primary condition of human experience."[61] Even more directly stated: "there is no self-understanding that is not mediated by signs, symbols, and texts."[62] For Ricoeur, the path back to authenticity must be retraced through the various experiences of humans as articulated in symbols, metaphors, myths, theories, and narratives.[63] In contrast, Heidegger's statement that "the metaphorical exists only

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[60]Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 19.

[61]Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," p. 16.

[62]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

[63]It should be noted that several scholars disagree with Ricoeur's assessment of Heidegger and the efficacy of the long over the short route to an authentic ontology. For an interesting discussion concerning the advantages of both see Patrick Bourgeois

within the metaphysical," reveals a more suspicious attitude toward language.[64] Heidegger believes that certain forms of language are deleterious. Clinging to dichotomies engendered by post-Socratic philosophy, metaphors and analogies obfuscate the path back to unity of Being and beings. Heidegger tries to avoid this tendency by "allowing language to, in his words, `speak itself'(*Sagen*)."[65] To this aim, Heidegger "explores how, in this "`thoughtful saying' (*Sagen*), poetry (*Dichten*) and thinking (*Denken*) have a type of mutually dependent relationship whereby both are essential to the process, yet remain distinct."[66] Heidegger's late works try to resolve this conflict between literal and figurative language without lapsing into the old dichotomies of metaphysical thinking.

Ricoeur also addresses the incongruities between literal and figurative language, but he does so precisely through an analysis of symbols and metaphors. In fact, for Ricoeur, it is the unique function of certain forms of figurative language that actually begets rival interpretations. Another way of stating this is that metaphors and symbols precede phenomenology and hermeneutics. Symbols are "an effort to bypass the thorny problem about the starting point of philosophy."[67]

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and Frank Schalow's article "Hermeneutics of Existence: Conflict and Resolution," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 31, Spring, 1987.

[64]Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, (Pfulligne: Gunther Neske, 1975), p. 89.

[65]Morny Joy, "Derrida and Ricoeur: A Case of Mistaken Identity (and Difference), *Journal of Religion*, v. 68, #1, January 1988, p. 508.

[66]*Ibid.*, p. 510.

[67]Paul Ricoeur, "The Symbols . . . Food For Thought," *Philosophy Today*, IV (1960): p., 97.

> In contrast to philosophies wrestling with starting points, a meditation on symbols starts right out with language and with the meaning that is always there already. It takes off in the midst of language already existing, where everything has already been said after a fashion; it gladly embraces thought with all its presuppositions. Its big problem is not to get started, but, in the midst of words, to remember once again.[68]

One of the keys to this passage is the call to "remember once again," because, as Ricoeur points out, "we raise the problem of the symbol now, at this period of history, . . . because of certain characteristics of our modernity--and as a rejoinder to modernity."[69] Symbols address a fundamental malady of modernity, the increasing sterility of language. Ricoeur comments: "In this very age when language is becoming more precise, more univocal, [and] more technical . . . it is in this very age that we seek to recharge language, to start out again from language in its fullness."[70] And symbols are the means by which we rejuvenate language because "the symbol provides food for thought."

The reason symbols are productive, or, more precisely, regenerative, is because they are multivocal or have a double sense. Ricoeur states: "I define symbol as any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only though the first."[71] This "double sense," inherent in symbols, is not

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[68]*Ibid.*, p. 196.

[69]*Ibid.*, p. 196.

[70]*Ibid.*, p. 197.

[71]Paul Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," ed. Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 98.

simply due to ambiguity or duality. The fecundity of symbols lies in the fact that they allow for hermeneutics. Signs and symbols differ in that

> [i]n every sign a sensory vehicle is the bearer of a signifying function that makes it stand for something else. But I will not say that I interpret the sensory sign when I understand what it says. Interpretation has to do with a more complicated intentional structure: a first meaning is set up which intends something, but this object in turn refers to something else which is intended only through the first object.[72]

Interpretation, then, hinges on the specific structure of symbols. Acknowledging Ferdinand de Saussure's discussion of signs, Ricoeur admits that signs also have dualities. In fact, they have dual dualities; he states: "First, there is the structural duality of the sensory sign and the signification it carries (the signifier and signified); second there is the intentional duality of the sign (both sensory and meaningful, signifier and signified) and the thing or object designated."[73] However, the duality inherent in signs is more basic than the duality found in symbols because "[i]n a symbol the duality is added to and superimposed upon the duality of sensory sign and signification as a relation of meaning to meaning; it presupposes signs that already have a primary, literal, manifest meaning."[74] Signs refer back to the signified whereas symbols refer back to the meaning generated by the sign. Signs are intended to be transparent and technical, they "say only what they want to say by indicating the thing signified, [but] symbols are opaque. The first obvious literal meaning itself looks analogically toward a second meaning which is found only in the first meaning. . . .

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[72]Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 12.

[73]*Ibid.*, p. 12.

[74]*Ibid.*, p. 13.

This opaqueness is the symbol's very profundity, an inexhaustible depth."[75] This opaqueness or ambiguity is not the result, however, of a lack of precision; rather it is because the second meaning is not comprehended along rational lines. Ricoeur states that

> in the symbol I cannot objectivize the analogous relation that binds the second meaning to the first. By living in the first meaning I am drawn by it beyond itself: the symbolic meaning is constituted in and through the literal meaning, which bring about the analogy by giving the analogue. Unlike a comparison which we look at from the outside, the symbol is the very movement of the primary meaning that makes us share in the latent meaning and thereby assimilates us to the symbolized, without our being able intellectually to dominate the similarity. It is in this sense that a symbol "gives"; it gives, because it is a primary intentionality which yields a second meaning.[76]

"Knowing" a symbol is achieved only by sharing and assimilating with it; verification takes place at the internal or existential level. This form of knowing differs from rational comprehension because humans do not simply grasp a meaning, they participate in and beyond symbols. Arising out of the literal meaning stirs a figurative and non-rational meaning; "the symbol yields its meaning in enigma."[77]

What does it mean to say that new meaning is generated out of itself? Ricoeur formulates this question in the following manner: "The problem is how thought can be both bound and free, how the immediacy of the symbol can be reconciled with the mediacy of thought. . . . [T]he crux, of the problem lies in the relationship between symbols and hermeneutics. Every symbol gives rise to comprehension by means of

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[75]Ricoeur, "The Symbol...Food For Thought," p. 199.

[76]Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection," *International Philosophy Quarterly*, XI, (1962), p. 194.

[77]Ricoeur, "The Symbol . . . Food For Thought," p. 199.

some interpretation. How can this understanding be both in and beyond the symbol?"[78] Ricoeur's attempt to answer this question is what prompted him to expand his inquiry from symbols, to metaphors, and eventually to narrative.

Initially, he set out to explore these questions under the assumption that the symbol was the key to hermeneutics. He states: "I even went so far as to reduce hermeneutics to the interpretation of symbols; that is to say, to the making explicit of the second--and often hidden--sense of these double-sense expressions."[79] Given this belief, Ricoeur analyzed the symbol in three stages: phenomenology; hermeneutics; and (speculative) thought as emanating from language. However, Ricoeur increasingly became dissatisfied with this formulation. He states:

> You know that my earlier work was concerned with symbolic expressions. Today, however, I see that this was premature because it lacked a semantic foundation and precisely a theory of discourse. . . . I no longer feel that the symbol is a phenomenon of words; it is a discursive phenomenon. This means that all words possess many meanings, and polysemy is general. All discourse, however, is not polysemous and that's where the problem of the symbol lies. In what types of discourse do certain words preserve more than one signification in order to create a certain meaningful effect that we call the symbol? Better armed, I would say, this is the way to that I would now attack the problem of the symbol. The symbol is a discursive effect based on the general polysemy of all words in ordinary language. However, you can make two types of discourse with polysemous words. You can make univocal discourses, discourses in which polysemy is reduced. This happens by all sorts of mechanisms which belong to the very nature of discourse, for instance, by the fact that only one dimension of one word's meaning sanctions only one dimension of the other words' meanings by the phenomenon of co-optation which Greimas has described quite clearly. Next to this sort of screening of polysemy is the type of discourse in which polysemy is not only allowed but desired and

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[78]*Ibid.*, p. 202.

[79]Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), p. 16.

> maintained. There we have a certain effect, the symbolic effect. This comes about when many dimensions of meaning come into play simultaneously because a certain structure of the sentence has preserved them.[80]

Another way of putting this is that "no symbolism . . . can display its resources of multiple meanings (*plurivocite*) outside appropriate contexts, that is to say, within the framework of an entire text, of a poem, for example."[81]

The key to understanding Ricoeur's transitions, then, is to realize that he was searching for the appropriate *site* of hermeneutics. As the above analysis reveals, the productive faculty of symbols hinges upon the existence of univocal meaning. In order for a figurative image to be both bound and free there must be some literal meaning to begin from. Ricoeur began his search at the semiological level (that of the sign), and differentiated the sign from the symbol. However, after encountering post-structural critiques, especially Derrida's, which exposed that all signs were polysemous and hence unstable, Ricoeur had to amend his conclusions.[82] By turning to the semantic level (that

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[80]Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophy and Communication: Round-Table Discussion Between Ricoeur and Derrida," *A Journal of Rhetorical Theory*, 1983, Fall, pp. 317-334.

[81]Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," p. 16.

[82]It is important to note that Derrida and Ricoeur essentially engaged in a published debate over the role of metaphor. The debate began with Derrida's *White Mythology* (1971), which was countered by Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975), followed by Derrida's "The Retrait of Metaphor" (1978). In addition to these primary sources, a lively debate exists within the secondary literature. See Patrick Bouegeois and Frank Schalow, "Hermeneutics of Existence: Conflict and Resolution," *Philosophy Today*, v. 31, Spring 1987; Morny Joy, "Derrida and Ricoeur: A Case of Mistaken Identity (and Difference), *Journal of Religion*, v. 68, #1, 1988; Douglas McGaughey, "Ricoeur's Metaphor and Narrative Theories as a Foundation for a Theory of Symbol," *Religious Studies*, 1988; Leonard Lawlor, "Dialectic and Iterability: The Confrontation Between Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida," *Philosophy Today*, v. 32, Spring 1988 and *Imagination and Chance: The Difference Between the Thought of Ricoeur and Derrida.*

of the sentence) and exploring the structure of metaphors, Ricoeur attempted to refute Derrida. The key to understanding the difference between Derrida and Ricoeur is to grasp their different conceptions of metaphor.

Ricoeur and Derrida both agree that metaphors are productive. However, "for Derrida there is an exploding of the referential meaning of the metaphor (the text folds back on itself endlessly) but for Ricoeur the metaphor announces an explosion of meaning (the text is broken open to the lifeworld for the first time) to `more'."[83] Derrida contends that the explosive qualities of metaphors have been co-opted by the philosophical tradition. In effect, metaphors have been reigned in by a metaphysics of the "proper." He states: "the entire teleology of meaning, which constructs the philosophical concept of metaphor, coordinates metaphor with the manifestation of truth."[84] However, because signs are polysemous and unstable it is impossible to equate metaphors with truth. Stable or proper meanings are presupposed, but they do not exist. Hence, "following Derrida's tack, we are [actually] left with a language devoid of metaphor, which continues to operate in a quasi-metaphorical fashion. Thus we have virtual metaphors of metaphors, traces of traces, repeating themselves ad infinitum, ad nauseam, in divergent, discordant variations on a theme."[85] Ricoeur contends that

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Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

[83]Douglas R. McGaughey, "Ricoeur's Metaphor and Narrative Theories as a Foundation For A Theory of Symbol," *Religious Studies*, 24, (1988), p. 418.

[84]Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 270.

[85]Morny Joy, "Derrida and Ricoeur: A Case of Mistaken Identity (and Difference)," *Journal of Religion*, v.68, #1, (1988), p. 515.

Derrida is mistaken as to how metaphors operate. He argues that metaphors do not function because they are grounded in a metaphysics of the "proper," but rather because of specific semantic tensions that manifest themselves in the everyday use of language. Criticizing Derrida, he states that

> one attaches to the opposition between the figurative and the proper a meaning that is itself metaphysical, one which a more precise semantics dispels. In fact, this shatters the illusion that words possess a proper, i.e., primitive, natural, original (*etumon*) meaning in themselves . . . the metaphorical use of a word could always be opposed to its literal use; but literal does not mean proper in the sense of originary, but simply current, `usual'. The literal sense is the one that is lexicalized. There is thus no need for a metaphysics of the proper to justify the difference between literal and figurative. It is use in discourse that specifies the difference between the literal and metaphorical, and not some sort of prestige attributed to the primitive or original. Moreover, the distinction between literal and metaphorical exists only through the conflict of two interpretations. One interpretation employs only values that are already lexicalized and so succumbs to semantic impertinence; the other, instituting a new semantic pertinence, requires a twist in the word that displaces its own meaning. In this way, a better semantic analysis of the metaphorical process suffices to dispel the mystique of the `proper', without any need for metaphoricity to succumb along with it.[86]

From Derrida's position metaphors can only operate if there is an actual stable foundation of truth-claims to which metaphors, even if in a roundabout fashion, refer back to; however, for Ricoeur all that is required are common or shared meanings. Ricoeur asserts that while language is indeed continually changing, there is enough stability, or shared meaning, for metaphors to function.

While Ricoeur seems to put the question of univocal and multivocal to rest, that alone is not enough to break the circle of language. For in order for thought to emerge

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[86]Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp. 290-91.

out of metaphors, thought has to go beyond language. But if all experience is mediated by language, how can thought go "beyond" language? This is where hermeneutics plays a crucial role. Ricoeur argues that there is no sense looking for a beginning in the traditional linear sense. The process is better described as a circular affair. Ricoeur states:

> the only functioning of language we are aware of operates within an already constituted order; metaphor does not produce a new order except by creating rifts in an old order. Nevertheless, could we not imagine that the order itself is born the same way it changes? . . . The idea of an initial metaphorical impulse destroys . . . oppositions between proper and figurative, ordinary and strange, order and transgression. It suggests the idea that order itself proceeds from the metaphorical constitution of semantic fields, which themselves give rise to genre and species.[87]

This is what he earlier argued takes place with symbols; they give rise to thought. In the beginning, Ricoeur had not focused on the structure of language and therefore had not realized that the semiological unit was too unstable to be the site of generation. Ricoeur's work on metaphors explicates the semantic structures of metaphor in order to establish that enough stability exists, at the level of the sentence, to allow for regeneration.

Ricoeur's work does not stop at the semantic level. While his examination of metaphors established the possibility of generating thought, metaphors also operate on too narrow a level. Metaphors generate thought beyond the sentence, but the sentence, just like the sign, does not stand alone. It exists within a larger context, the narrative.

Ricoeur gives three specific reasons for expanding his inquiry into narratives. He states his "inquiry into storytelling responds first of all to a very general concern . . .

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[87]Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp. 22-23.

that of preserving the fullness, diversity, and irreducibility of the various uses of language."[88] By examining the various modes of storytelling, Ricoeur hopes to recover and preserve the various "non-rational" varieties, such as poetry, fiction, and myth, as legitimate conveyors of meaning and truth.

Ricoeur's second reason for studying narrative is his desire to gather and compare the divergent varieties of storytelling. The promulgation of forms itself is not a problem, but, because it has been accompanied by a false hierarchy, certain forms are privileged whereas others are demeaned. He states:

> This fragmentation presents a major problem for philosophers by virtue of the major dichotomy that divides the narrative field and that produces a thoroughgoing opposition between them, on the one hand, narratives that have a truth claim comparable to that of the descriptive forms of discourse to be found in the sciences--let us say history and the related literary genres of biography and autobiography--and, on the other hand, fictional narratives such as epics, dramas, short stories, and novels, to say nothing of narrative modes that use a medium other than language: films, for example, and possibly painting and other plastic arts.[89]

The so-called descriptive forms of discourse, such as history, biography, autobiography, and, to an even greater degree, certain social science disciplines, are seen as embodying truth-telling or objective modes of narration. Fictional narratives, however, are dismissed as wholly subjective and thus unimportant. Ricoeur challenges this delineation by asserting that there is a functional unity that underlies all forms of narrative. He states: "My basic hypothesis, in this regard, is the following: the common feature of human experience, that which is marked, organized, and clarified in the act of storytelling in all its forms, is its temporal character. . . . By treating the temporal

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[88]Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," pp. 1-2.

[89]*Ibid.*, p. 2.

character of experience as the common reference of both history and fiction, I make fiction, history, and time one single problem."[90] It is obvious that Ricoeur's interest in re-legitimizing fictional narratives is not driven by facile motivations. Quite the contrary, again following Heidegger's cue, Ricoeur attempts to achieve authentic *Verstehen*. He accepts Heidegger's assertion that temporality is a fundamental characteristic of *Dasein*; but Ricoeur's contribution is the notion that we understand or perceive time in and through narratives.[91]

Ricoeur's third reason for studying narratives is because he believes that the text is the appropriate site of hermeneutics. This becomes clear in the following statement:

> If indeed, narrativity is to mark, organize, and clarify temporal existence . . . we must seek in language use a standard of measurement that satisfies this need for delimiting, ordering, and making explicit. That the text is the linguistic unit we are looking for and that it constitutes the appropriate medium between temporal experience and the narrative act can be briefly outlined in the following manner. As a linguistic unit, a text is, on the one hand, an expansion of the first unit of present meaning which is the sentence. On the other hand, it contributes a principle of trans-sentential organization that is exploited by the act of storytelling in all its forms.[92]

The text, then, is the only linguistic form that both provides for enough stability to allow for the regeneration of thought, as well as mark, order and make explicit the human experience of temporal existence. But is every text a narrative? And more pointedly, exactly how does a text mark, order and make explicit time?

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[90]*Ibid.*, p. 2.

[91]Ricoeur and Heidegger's differing approaches to time are, again, due to their long and short routes. Ricoeur believes that only by taking stock of the ontic level, in this case by analyzing narratives as the mediator of temporality, can legitimate *Verstehen* be attained.

[92]Ricoeur, "On Interpretation," p. 3.

Ricoeur follows Aristotle by defining *muthos* as the key ingredient to narratives. He contends that Aristotle meant *muthos* to apply to more than the static structure of a narrative, "but rather [intended] an operation (as indicated by the endings -sis, as in *poiesis*, *sunthesis*, *sustasis*), namely, the structuring that makes us speak of putting-into-the-form-of-a-plot. The emplotment consists mainly in the selection and arrangement of the events and the actions recounted, which make of the fable a story that is `complete and entire' with a beginning, middle and end."[93] Plots make narratives intelligible. In other words, the power of plot, and therefore narrative, is its ability to provide unity to "those ingredients of human action, which, in ordinary experience, remain dissimilar and discordant. . . . From this intelligible character of the plot, it follows that the ability to follow a story constitutes a very sophisticated form of understanding."[94]

The common response to this assertion is that fiction has no reference. Unlike history, or even biography, fiction does not have to deal with or reference actual events. Perceived as entirely a work of the imagination, fiction is dismissed as purely subjective and thus non-consequential. Ricoeur counters that this is an absolute misunderstanding of what constitutes fiction and narrative. Emphasizing that the fable is "an imitation of an action," he states:

> In one way or another, all symbol systems contribute to shaping reality. More particularly, the plots that we invent help us to shape our confused, formless, and in the last resort mute temporal experience. . . . This is why suspending the reference can only be an intermediary moment between the preunderstanding of the world and the transfiguration of

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[93] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

> daily reality brought about by fiction itself. Indeed, the models of actions elaborated by narrative fiction are models for redescribing the practical field in accordance with the narrative typology resulting from the work of the productive imagination. Because it is a world, the world of the text necessarily collides with the real world in order to "remake" it, either by confirming it or by denying it. However, even the most ironic relation between art and reality would be incomprehensible if art did not both disturb and rearrange our relation to reality. If the world of the text were without any assignable relation to the real world, language would not be "dangerous," in the sense in which Holderlin called it so before both Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin.[95]

Thus, narrative, when properly understood, not only provides the stability for the generation of thought; it also allows for the intelligible re-ordering of human existence and experience. Narratives are not fictions in the sense that they have no relation to reality, but rather they are fictitious because they allow the intelligible ordering of discordant events; they provide unity where there is, perhaps, none. Another way of stating this, is that narratives provide articulation to human experiences that are otherwise inexpressible. Ricoeur cites St. Augustine's query: "`What is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is; if someone asks me, I no longer know.'"[96] The plot, by way of narrative, gives expression to the mute experience of time.

Conclusion

A review of Cassirer, Voegelin, and Ricoeur has revealed that symbols perform several unique functions. Symbols are able to fix, stabilize and ground the old while giving birth to the new and dynamic. Ernst Cassirer calls this quality "symbolic pregnance"; Eric Voegelin discusses it under the rubric of reinvigoration; and Paul Ricoeur coins it "symbol . . . food for thought." For each thinker, any reexamination of

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[95]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

[96]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

a symbol proves to be both a return and a new beginning. It is this distinctive ability that allows symbols to provide a regenerative function for both language and philosophy. However, because symbols share a danger common to ideas and concepts, the tendency of ossifying into dogma, symbols must themselves be regenerated. This process of regeneration, of both thought and of particular symbols, takes place in and through narratives. In other words, symbols do not exist in isolation but within stories and myths. This larger issue, the importance of narrative and its role in human existence, is a much discussed topic, but the specific role of symbols has received considerably less attention.[97]

All three of the philosophers discussed contend that symbols are in some sense a solution or, at least, part of a solution to the persistent problems associated with metaphysics. For Cassirer, symbols provide a response to the Kantian gulf between mind and matter, ought and is. He contends that the symbol, which exists in the phenomenal world, is a vast improvement over the strict idealism of Kantian and post-Kantian attempts to resolve the chasms associated with metaphysics. In Voegelin's case, symbols and the process of evaluating legitimate and illegitimate symbols provides unique and powerful insights; they reveal ontological clues to the nature of existence. Voegelin argues that through the analysis of the history of symbols and

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[97]The list of relevant sources concerning the importance of narrative is too extensive and too varied to list. However, the primary sources for this work were: Alsdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Richard Niebuhr, "The Story of Our Life," *The Meaning of Revelation*, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1941); Stanley Hauerwas, *Why Narrative: Readings in Narrative Theology*, (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989); Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, v I, II and III, trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

symbolization it becomes apparent that existence and reality are not best characterized by the traditional language of metaphysics: being and becoming, idealism and materialism, or mind and body. Reality and human existence is most aptly described not in terms of dichotomies but as tensional relationships, in other words, existence within the In-Between or *metaxy*. For Voegelin, the study and understanding of symbols and the process of symbolization is a means by which we can disclose the structures of existence. In this way, symbols address the typical problems of metaphysics. For Ricoeur, symbols and narratives fulfill many functions, not least of which they are a rejoinder to the postmodern critique, in particular to the problems presented by Heidegger and Derrida. With respect to Heidegger, Ricoeur contends that a more complete understanding of symbols, metaphors, and, of course, time and narrative, provides an improvement upon the ontological inquiries of *Being and Time*. In this regard, Ricoeur is not in opposition to Heidegger so much as he is an extension; he agrees with Heidegger's driving motivation but disagrees as to the appropriate means.[98] In contrast, Ricoeur's work on symbols and metaphors is a direct rebuttal to the Derridean critique of language. Their dispute hinges upon the role and ability of language to represent reality. For Derrida, language does not clear up reality; it obfuscates. He acknowledges that language is productive but argues that what it constructs is not a "re-presentation" of reality but a separate linguistic reality. Thus, instead of referring back to being, language, in effect, refers to non-being. Language does not illuminate existence, it veils it. Ricoeur agrees that this is sometimes the case

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[98]This, again, refers to Heidegger's "short route" to Being as opposed to Ricoeur's "long route."

but argues that this is only when language has degenerated. He maintains that Derrida's work deals solely with "dead metaphors," and offers a view of language capable of representation but only if it is continually regenerated.

It is important to distinguish symbols from every signification. Signs can refer to anything, but symbols have a narrower purpose. Because of the unique quality of symbols to generate meaning beyond themselves, symbols have been utilized as the means by which humans express their search for meaning and identity, both individual and social. Human beings and civilizations, now and as far back as anthropological research stretches, have universally been involved in the attempt to define their world and their place in that world. This process of finding one's place, of defining one's purpose and identity, is done through symbols. Symbols, as the concrete representations of the human search for identity, are, ultimately, responses to the Socratic dictum: "Know thy Self." In short, we attempt to define ourselves by and through symbols and, additionally, through the process of communal legitimation of particular symbols, we also shape and define our social identities.

Symbols and narratives enjoy a distinct advantage over philosophy (at least philosophy since the Enlightenment) in that they are less likely to be taken as conclusive or final. There always exists a certain amount of ambiguity within symbols and stories; there is always room for another interpretation; and no interpretation, unless illegitimately backed by coercion, can be asserted as final.[99] In other words, by

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[99]Obviously, there are many examples in the past where authorities have promoted an interpretation of a symbol, myth or story as conclusive. However, an examination of how symbols are re-created, how they operate within narratives, will demonstrate that such activities are invalid. Symbols and texts are maintained by hermeneutics or reinterpretation. Once a particular interpretation is held as final or

their very form symbols and stories are a defense against assumptions of certainty. In the wake of the ideologies that have plagued the twentieth century, this is no small advantage. Symbols and stories have the potential to provide amelioration of the human condition, buttress resolve and determination, without the likelihood of promulgating absolute truth-claims.

There is no evidence that Camus was familiar with the writings of these three thinkers. Additionally, the late works of Voegelin and Ricoeur were written years after Camus death. Nevertheless, the fact that three thinkers of the caliber of Cassirer, Voegelin, and Ricoeur turned to myths, symbols, and narrative is evidence of a larger philosophic trend. Indeed, while not generally acknowledged, a close examination of his writings reveals that Albert Camus was a contributor to this movement. In his nonfiction, Camus develops a theory of symbolization very similar to Cassirer, Voegelin, and Ricoeur. While his work is neither as philosophically explicit or as astute, his sensitivity to the creative dimensions extends and enhances an understanding of myth, symbols, and narrative. Moreover, unlike Cassirer, Voegelin, and Ricoeur, Camus was expicitly engaged in the creation of symbolic narratives.

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conclusive a symbol, any symbol, begins to degenerate into dogma.

Modern intelligence is in utter confusion. Knowledge has become so diffuse that the world and the mind have lost all point of reference. It is a fact that we are suffering from nihilism. . . . In order to be cured, we must make peace with this lucidity, this clairvoyance. We must take into account the glimpses we have suddenly had of our exile. Intelligence is in confusion not because knowledge has changed everything. It is so because it cannot accept that change. It hasn't "got accustomed to that idea." Nothing will remain but change and the clear knowledge that the mind has of it. There's a whole civilization to be reconstructed.

Albert Camus, *Notebooks: 1942-1951.*

Chapter Three
An Artist's Symbolic Reconstruction of Political Reality

Camus on Reason, Art, and Symbols

Camus's writings on symbol and narrative are scattered and unsystematic. Yet, when gathered into a cohesive unit, they are reasonably clear and remarkably congruent with the tradition described in the thought of Cassirer, Voegelin, and Ricoeur. Like those thinkers, the beginning point for understanding Camus's position on symbols rests with his view of reason.

Two points are important for a proper understanding of Camus's view of reason. First, Camus was never an irrationalist; he always maintained that reason was efficacious but limited. Second, any complete discussion of Camus on reason, ultimately leads to art in general and the novel in particular.

Given Camus's early writings on and continued recognition of the absurd, it is not surprising that he was initially mistaken for an irrationalist. Patrick Henry remarks:

> Albert Camus is quite easily linked with the long tradition of skeptical French thought from Montaigne to Voltaire and from Pascal to Vigny. His explicit proclamation of the absurdity of human existence however

> indicates that his anti-rationalism is more extreme than that of his French predecessors.[1]

John Cruickshank agrees and states that "[w]ithin a historical context . . . the notion of the absurd appears as a particularly intense form of anti-rationalism. It may be so intense as to differ from . . . anti-rationalism in kind as well as in degree."[2]

In an effort to elucidate these differences, Cruickshank contrasts Camus to the anti-rationalism of Henri Bergson. He notes that unlike Camus, Bergson maintains a "continuing belief in the inherent intelligibility of existence. To say that existence is intelligible means for Bergson both that it can be known and that it is known."[3] In other words, the inability of reason to lead to an understanding of reality is not due to the nature of existence, but rather to a failure to distinguish between ways of knowing. For Bergson, the central problem lies in a narrow conception of reason. He feels that what is denoted by the term "reason," at least since the Enlightenment, is better characterized by the term *intellect*. As a highly practical function of the mind that facilitates action, the intellect cuts, divides, and quantifies experience. The material world is amenable to such division and categorization, and this accounts for the power and persuasion of the intellect; the intellect allows for the manipulation and control of the natural world. In its drive to categorize and control, however, the intellect ignores other aspects of reality. Motivated by the desire to maximize functionality, the intellect

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[1]Patrick Henry, "Voltaire and Camus: the limits of reason and the awareness of absurdity," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, Vol CXXXVIII, (Oxfordshire: The Voltaire Foundation, 1975), p. 59.

[2]John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 50.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 51.

tends to focus attention upon the concepts or categories it has generated, often to the exclusion of everything else. Such selectivity can, and ultimately does, lead to the belief that the substance of reality lies within the concepts and categories and not in reality itself. This error is what Alfred North Whitehead later termed the *fallacy of misplaced concreteness*. Bergson contends that such delusions can only be rectified through the recognition and use of another more subtle manner of knowing, *intuition*. Intuition is the ability to go beyond analytic concepts and experience existence at its most fundamental. Intuition corrects the intellect by revealing that consciousness is not a series of isolated or static events but rather a flow. For Bergson, existence is the continuous and undivided flow of the *elan vital*, and we are integral participants in this process. Any attempt to fix or stabilize a meaning or definition of existence ultimately fails because it does not take into account life as a process. In short, only through intuition can humans come to know the fullness and flux of existence.[4] This faith that the structure of reality can be known, albeit through non-rational means, is the point of departure for Bergson and Camus. Cruickshank states:

> Contemporary "philosophers of the absurd" not only claim that reality is unknown, but that it is unknowable. . . . Whereas most earlier thinkers stressed the shortcomings of reason partly out of enthusiasm for an alternative means of knowledge (intuition), Camus claims that reason is powerless and he offers no comparable alternative avenue to truth.[5]

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[4]Given Bergson's position, the term "know" must be qualified. Believing that reality was constantly changing--and that "knowing" has traditionally had static connotations--Bergson defined "knowing" as more of grasping or coming into awareness of the true structure of reality.

[5]Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, p. 52.

While Cruickshank's distinction is valid, those familiar with the whole of Camus's thought will be uneasy by the grouping of Camus with "philosophers of the absurd." Subsequent research has demonstrated that Camus's thought is not as radical as some of his contemporaries. For instance, there is considerable difference between Camus's notion of the absurd and Sartre's. Camus presents the absurd as a sensibility; it is an experience that arises out of the confrontation of the individual and the world; it makes no claim about the structure of reality except that we cannot know it. On the other hand, Sartre's notion of the absurd is a commentary on the contingency of Being itself. Sartre's version of the absurd asserts that fundamental reality is chaotic and wholly unintelligible. Camus cannot make such a statement. Nothing in Camus's presentation of the absurd as a sensibility necessitates that reality be incoherent. All that can be logically inferred from Camus's description of the absurd is that reality is unknown, not that it is unintelligible. The structure of reality may be ordered or it may not be, on this issue Camus must remain silent. Cruickshank acknowledges that Camus never resolved this issue.[6]

Camus's cosmological confusion, however, did not lead him to embrace irrationalism. For instance, Camus never denies the tangible world. He extols the natural world in virtually all his works, fiction and nonfiction; and it is not too much to say that Camus finds solace in the tangibleness of nature. Camus's reveling in the natural world is more than simple hedonism; it is the satisfaction of knowing. Seeing, smelling, hearing, and feeling the world everyday, Camus believes that denial of this world is ridiculous. Equally ludicrous is the tendency to construct from the tangible

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[6]See Cruickshank's discussion of the "unknown" and "unknowable," pp. 50-52.

aspects of reality a system of thought that transcends the world and claims to comprehend the whole of reality. Once one moves from the tangible world, the assurance of truth dissipates. Camus put it this way:

> Here are trees and I know their gnarled surface, water and I feel its taste. These scents of grass and stars at night, certain evenings when the heart relaxes--how shall I negate this world whose power and strength I feel? Yet all the knowledge on earth will give me nothing to assure me that this world is mine. You describe it to me and you teach me to classify it. You enumerated its laws and in my thirst for knowledge I admit that they are true. You take apart its mechanism and my hope increases. At the final stage you teach me that this wondrous and multicolored universe can be reduced to the atom and that the atom itself can be reduced to the electron. All this is good and I wait for you to continue. But you tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realize then that you have been reduced to poetry: I shall never know. Have I the time to become indignant? You have already changed theories. So that science that was to teach me everything ends up in a hypothesis, that lucidity founders in metaphor, that uncertainty is resolved in a work of art. What need had I of so many efforts? The soft lines of these hills teach me much more. I have returned to my beginning. I realize that if through science I can seize phenomena and enumerate them, I cannot, for all that, apprehend the world. Were I to trace its entire relief with my finger, I should not know any more. And you give me the choice between a description that is sure but that teaches me nothing and hypotheses that claim to teach me but that are not sure. A stranger to myself and to the world, armed solely with a thought that negates itself as soon as it asserts, what is this condition in which I can have peace only by refusing to know and to live, in which the appetite for conquest bumps into walls that defy its assaults? To will is to stir up paradoxes.[7]

This quotation appears to establish a position similar to Bergson's. The world can be "enumerated," but can never be known through science. Would the addition of Bergsonian intuition resolve this paradox? It is important to note that Camus was familiar with Bergson's work. In fact, at the age of eighteen Camus wrote an article in

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[7]Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage International, 1991), pp. 19-20.

Sud, an Algerian periodical largely set up for students, expressing his disappointment with Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. This article was prompted by his mentor Jean Grenier, who was a devoted follower of Bergson. Carl Viggiani reports that Grenier spent an entire year lecturing on Bergson's notion of intuition to Camus and his classmates.[8]

While Camus rejects intuition as a solution to the problems associated with rationalism, he is not an irrationalist. Indeed, as the lengthy quote demonstrates, Camus's anti-rationalism is not so much an assault on reason itself as it is an attack on inflated rationality. Humans can know the world around them, at least to some limited degree. Far from being an irrationalist, Camus maintains a kind of "stoic adherence to reason."[9]

The "soft lines of the hill" are not sufficient, however, because partial knowledge cannot satiate the human thirst for unity. According to Camus, a fundamental characteristic of humans is the desire to know the whole, the desire for unity. He writes: "I said the world is absurd, but I was too hasty. This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as it does on the world."[10] Thus, it is the

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[8]See Carl Viggiani, "Albert Camus' First Publications." *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. LXXV, November 1969.

[9]Patrick Henry, "Voltaire and Camus: the limits of reason and the awareness of absurdity," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, (Oxfordshire: The Voltaire Foundation, 1975), p. 97.

[10]Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 21. (Emphasis added).

frustration of the "longing for clarity," occasioned by the limitations of reason, that ultimately leads to the sensibility of the absurd. This makes it clear that while Camus's skepticism is more intense than Bergsonian anti-rationalism, it is not a form of irrationalism. For Camus, the absurd is more psychological than cosmological.

While perhaps not as harrowing as versions that deny everything, Camus's conception of the absurd is nevertheless profoundly disturbing. The sensibility of the absurd, the awareness that we will never know in the way our heart desires, prompts intense skepticism. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, it leads Camus to doubt the relevance of existence itself. He puts it powerfully in the opening line: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering all the fundamental questions of philosophy."[11]

Every searching or self-reflective human being comes into conflict with the absurd at one time or another. Most turn away. Others devise quixotic solutions, some rational, others religious, that attempt to explain or resolve the tensions of human existence. For Camus, these are philosophical or religious suicides and they represent the death of human lucidity and honesty.

> I know that in order to keep alive, the absurd cannot be settled. It escapes suicide to the extent that it is simultaneously awareness and rejection of death. . . . That discipline that the mind imposes on itself, that will conjured up out of nothing, that face-to-face struggle have something exceptional about them. To impoverish that reality whose inhumanity constitutes man's majesty is tantamount to impoverishing him himself. I understand then why the doctrines that explain everything to me also debilitate me at the same time. They relieve me of the weight of my own life, and yet I must carry it alone.[12]

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

Yet, the absurd cannot be confronted without assistance. It is too disorienting, too horrible. He notes: "All those lives maintained in the rarefied air of the absurd could not persevere without some profound and constant thought to infuse strength into them."[13] What Camus is seeking, then, is for something that can assist in the confrontation with the absurd without denying it. This is the role that art fulfills. "In this universe the work of art is then the sole chance of keeping this consciousness and of fixing its adventures." Art succeeds where reason fails because art and reason have different aims, with art "it is not a matter of explaining and solving, but of experiencing and describing."[14] Art does not claim nor endeavor to "reason to the concrete"; the evidence art provides is inductive not deductive. "The work of art embodies a drama of the intelligence but it proves this only indirectly." In short, art goes beyond reason because "[e]xpression begins where thought ends." The strength of art lies precisely in its indirectness; art does not claim to comprehend or explain the mystery of existence.

For Camus, there are distinctions to be made within artistic creation. Fictional creation is a "greater intellectualization" than other forms of art because it is a medium where "the temptation to explain remains the greatest, in which conclusion is almost inevitable." In certain art forms, painting, sculpture, and architecture, for instance, there is less of a chance for conclusiveness or finality. At best a sculpture or painting is greatly admired, perhaps even inspirational, but it is hardly ever seen as conclusive; it does not provide a unified vision of the world. A fictional tale, on the other hand, provides the illusion of rendering unity to the world; a sense of belonging and

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[13]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

[14]*Ibid.*, pp. 94-99.

coherence is achieved in a novel. Fiction creates self-contained worlds because stories have a beginning, middle and end. Characters, at least so far as the fictional work is concerned, come to a conclusion, and regardless of plot twists, there is a unity to the story. This is why Camus claims that fictional works and the novel are greater intellectualizations; they are akin to philosophical works in that they appear to offer conclusions and coherence to the world. Even in the most pessimistic of fictional tales there is still an end; things come to summation. This is vital. Indeed, by classifying philosophers as storytellers, Camus identifies philosophy as a type of narrative, albeit an insufficient type. Camus writes:

> To think is first of all to create a world (or to limit one's own world, which comes to the same thing). It is starting out from the basic disagreement that separates man from his experience in order to find a common ground according to one's nostalgia, a universe hedged with reasons or lighted up with analogies but which, in any case, gives an opportunity to rescind the unbearable divorce. The philosopher, even if he is Kant, is a creator. He has his characters, his symbols, and his secret action. He has his plot endings. On the contrary, the lead taken by the novel over poetry and the essay merely represents, despite appearances, a greater intellectualization of the art.[15]

What makes the novel distinctive from other art forms and from philosophy is its superior ability to confront its audience with an experience of unity and coherence. "Artistic creation is a demand for unity and a rejection of the world," and fictional creations provide conclusions that cannot be attained in reality.[16] Camus writes:

> The world of the novel is only a rectification of the world we live in, in pursuance of man's deepest wishes. For the world is undoubtedly the same one we know. The suffering, the illusion, the love the same. The

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[15]*Ibid.*, p. 101.

[16]Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage International, 1991), p. 253.

> heroes speak our language, have our weaknesses and our strength. Their universe is neither more beautiful nor more enlightening than ours. But they, at least, pursue their destinies to the bitter end. . . . It is here that we can no longer keep pace with them, for they complete things that we can never consummate.[17]

He continues:

> Here we have an imaginary world, which is created by the rectification of the actual world--a world where suffering can, if it wishes, continue until death, where passions are never distracted, where people are prey to obsessions and are always present to one another. Man is finally able to give himself the alleviating form and limits which he pursues in his own life. The novel creates destiny to suit any eventuality. In this way it competes with creation and, provisionally, conquers death. A detailed analysis of the most famous novels would show . . . that the essence of the novel lies in this perpetual alteration, always directed toward the same ends. . . . Far from being moral or even purely formal, this alteration aims, primarily, at unity and thereby expresses a metaphysical need.[18]

The true significance of art is that it satisfies a metaphysical need, but it does so without changing, or claiming to change, concrete conditions. An additional advantage is that art is not a solution that will easily inspire a political program or movement; it "does not offer an escape for the intellectual ailment";[19] "it cannot be the end, the meaning, and the consolation of a life. Creating or not creating changes nothing."[20] Art supplies a sense of unity but it is a unity that is removed. We are aware that the unity and coherence provided by the novel is fictitious; we are not fooled into believing that all is

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[17]*Ibid.*, p. 163.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 264. (Emphasis added).

[19]Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 95.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 97.

well, or even that all is coherent. The novel satisfies the yearning for unity without compromising the confrontation with the absurd.

Clearly, Camus sees the philosophical novel as the quintessence of both art and philosophy. These claims are based on Camus's understanding myths, images, and symbols. Camus prefers images and symbols over philosophy and rationality because they are better able to represent or articulate human experience. For Camus, philosophy has become too abstract, too formalistic and immaterial. In contrast, art, "in order to speak about all to all . . . has to speak of what all know and of the reality common to us all. The sea, rains, necessity, desire, the struggle against death--these are the things that unite us all. We resemble one another in what we see together, in what we suffer together. Dreams change from individual to individual, but the reality of the world is common to us all."[21] Realizing this, every fiction writer "tries to give form to the passions of his time."[22]

If novelists are to create narratives that transcend their narrow historical situation, they must be more than simply a mouthpiece for contemporary sensibilities. Artists must also strive to create some distance in relation to reality. As Camus indicates, "the artist, if he must share the misfortune of his time, must also tear himself away in order to consider that misfortune and give it form."[23] The tension between history and hope is always a dangerous one, and Camus characterizes the artist as

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[21]Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 258.

[22]Albert Camus, "The Wager of Our Generation," *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage House, 1960), p. 237.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 238.

seeking a path, aiming at a balance, within this tension, "incapable of separating himself from the world's misfortune and passionately longing for solitude and silence; dreaming of justice, yet being himself a source of injustice."[24] In order to produce narratives that are truly representative, artists must try and generate symbols and narratives that both are and are not part of contemporary experience. In short, the artist is caught in an inherently paradoxical situation. For Camus, paradox does not lead to resignation. Hope, he seems to say, can be derived from myths and symbols themselves. Camus explains: "In my case, I have always drawn my hope from the idea of fecundity."[25] What sort of fecundity does Camus have in mind? He responds by stating that "[m]yths have no life of their own. They wait for us to give them flesh. If one man in the world answers their call, they give us their strength in all its fullness. *We must preserve this myth, and ensure that its slumber is not mortal so that its resurrection is possible.*"[26] This explicit statement describing regeneration reveals Camus's awareness of the importance, the necessity, of reviving myths and symbols. Further evidence of Camus's intent can be found in his *Notebooks: 1942-1951*. He states: "My work during these first two cycles: persons without lies, hence not real. They are not of this world. This is probably why up to now I am not a novelist in the usual sense. But rather an artist who creates *myths* to fit his passion and anguish."[27]

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[24]*Ibid.*, p. 238-39.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 239.

[26]Albert Camus, "Prometheus in the Underworld," *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 141. (Emphasis added).

[27]Albert Camus, *Notebooks 1942-1951*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Paragon House, 1991), p. 255. (Emphasis added).

Additionally, Camus's aesthetics provide certain guidelines to this process of regeneration. First, Camus makes it clear that it is the philosophical novelist who gives birth to or creates "new" symbols. Second, symbols, in order to resonate, must be in solidarity with the pathos of the common man. For the ground of symbols is always and ultimately human experience stripped to its essentials, namely "naked suffering, common to all, intermingling its roots with those of a stubborn hope."[28]

Struggling to understand basic human experiences, Camus's observed that "[t]here is in the human condition (and this is a commonplace of all literatures) a basic absurdity as well as an implacable nobility."[29] Human experience, then, is inherently paradoxical. This paradoxical character of experience is difficult to express, but art can to do so by way of the unique characteristics of symbols. After all, paradox is an intrinsic feature of symbolic expression. Clearly aware of this feature, Camus notes that symbols perpetually oscillate "between the natural and the extraordinary, the individual and the universal, the tragic and the everyday, the absurd and the logical."[30] For Camus, in order for artistic expression to avoid becoming another form of suicide, paradoxes must be enumerated, contradictions must be strengthened. Only symbols can fulfill this unique role. For "[a] symbol, indeed, assumes two planes, two worlds of ideas and sensations, and a dictionary of correspondences between them. This lexicon is the hardest thing to draw up. But awaking to the two worlds brought face to face is

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[28]Camus, "The Wager of Our Generation," *Resistance, Rebellion and Death*, p. 240.

[29]Camus, "Hope and the Absurd in the Works of Franz Kafka," *Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 127.

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 127.

tantamount to getting on the trail of their secret relationships."[31] For Camus, symbols are the only means of properly representing human experience.

In his essay on "Hope and the Absurd in the Work of Franz Kafka," Camus develops this notion of symbol and the position of the reader and the author with respect to symbols. Advocating two readings, because of the "double possibility of interpretation," Camus discloses that a symbol is always general in character, "however precise its translation." Thus, the artist, whose role is to restore the symbol, can do so only in a limited fashion. Indeed, "an artist can restore to it only its movement," which is to say its vitality. The double interpretation comment suggests that Camus felt that symbols have an existence of their own. Artists merely recover them and, if successful in that recovery, give to them a new sense of urgency and vitality, which is to say "movement." In this re-creation the artist does not retain interpretive ownership of the symbol. "A symbol always transcends the one who makes use of it and makes him say in reality more than he is aware of expressing."[32] Another way to phrase this is that symbols, especially some particular symbols, have an historical dimension.

In the act of recovery, the artist labors under other important constraints. In order for art to become representative it must conform to certain inherent limitations. Art is not frivolous. By providing a vision of unity the novel is, or at least can be, an ordering force in human existence. Indeed, as Camus states: "The free artist is the one who, with great effort, creates his own order."[33] Yet, there are limits to creation. "Art

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[31]*Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

[32]*Ibid.*, p. 124.

[33]Camus, "Create Dangerously," *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, p. 268.

lives only on the constraints it imposes on itself; it dies of all others. Conversely, if it does not constrain itself, it indulges in ravings and becomes a slave to mere shadows."[34] In order to create order, art must go beyond itself, but if it is not to result in pure fancy, art must be restrained. Since legitimate limits only emerge from the artistic endeavor itself, art is circular and self-generating. Art, and the symbol, are both bound and free.

With respect to the issue of limits, Camus argues that in terms of reality and aesthetics, the same guideposts are relevant. Neither total acceptance nor total rejection are legitimate. "By the treatment that the artist imposes on reality, he declares the intensity of his rejection." The closer the artist gets to complete rejection, the more formal; the closer to total acceptance, the more realist. He states: "The realist artist and the formal artist try to find unity where it does not exist, in reality in its crudest state, or in imaginative creation which wants to abolish all reality."[35]

Another paradox--perhaps even the overarching one--for the artist lies, then, in the creative act itself and in the style chosen to express that creation. As Camus indicates with respect to the artist's depiction of experience and the dangers of formalism and realism, rejecting reality or affirming nothing but reality are both dead ends. The unity we seek is some understanding of the world and our experience in the world, without rejecting that world or succumbing to it, a lucidity of meaning that acknowledges absurdity while embracing the sensuality of existence. Because there are limits to the degree to which this can be portrayed in language and art, artists cannot dispense with realism or imagination. Thus, whatever unity the authentic artist can

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[34]*Ibid.*, p. 268.

[35]*Ibid.*, p. 268.

achieve only "appears at the limit of the transformation that the artist imposes on reality. . . . This correction which the artist imposes by his language and by a redistribution of elements derived from reality is called *style* and gives the re-created universe its unity and its boundaries."[36]

Camus's notion of style, or limits in art, is most developed in *The Rebel.* As an illustration, he examines two genres of literary creation, Proust and the American novel, as represented by the "tough novels" of the thirties and forties. The American novel is an overemphasis on material reality while Proust is an example of a legitimate unity. Camus states that

> [t]he American novel claims to find its unity in reducing man either to elementals or to his external reactions and to his behavior. It does not choose feelings or passions to give a detailed description of [human behavior]. . . . It rejects analysis and the search for a fundamental psychological motive that could explain and recapitulate the behavior of a character. . . . Its technique consists in describing men by their outside appearances, in their most casual actions, or reproducing, without comment, everything they say down to their repetitions, and finally by acting as if men were entirely defined by their daily automatisms.[37]

Ultimately, the American novel is generated by the same desire as legitimate rebellion, the attempt to provide unity and coherence. Camus acknowledges that these artists are rejecting what they feel is detrimental. He writes: "It would seem that for these writers it is the inner life that deprives human actions of unity and that tears people away from one another. . . . But rebellion, which is one of the sources of the art of fiction, can find satisfaction only in constructing unity on the basis of affirming this interior reality and

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 269. (Emphasis added).

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 264.

not of denying it."[38] These artists claim to be realistic--to present reality as it objectively appears--but fail. In order to reproduce reality, a work would be an endless presentation of the minutia of daily life; but, the presentation of the "life of the body, reduced to its essentials, paradoxically produces an abstract and gratuitous universe, continuously denied by reality."[39] Realistic novels, do not, in the end, provide an accurate account of reality. Instead, overwhelmed by insignificant details, "realistic" novels become inane. Camus states:

> This type of novel, purged of interior life, in which men seem to be observed behind a pane of glass, logically ends, with its emphasis on the pathological, by giving itself as its unique subject the supposedly average man. . . . The simpleton is the ideal subject for such an enterprise since he can only be defined--and completely defined--by his behavior. He is the symbol of the despairing world in which wretched automatons live in a machine-ridden universe, which American novelists presented as a heart-rendering but sterile protest.[40]

In contrast, Proust, while focusing on the interior aspects of life, does not make the mistake of overemphasis. "He does not commit the error, which would counterbalance the error of American fiction, of suppressing the mechanical. He unites, on the contrary, into a superior form of unity."[41] There are plenty of examples of artists, however, who have not shown the restraint of Proust. Desiring to escape the contingency and flaws of reality, formal art rejects the material world; and while

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[38]*Ibid.*, p. 264.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 266.

[40]*Ibid.*, p. 266.

[41]*Ibid.*, p. 267.

"[f]ormalism can succeed in purging more and more of real content, there is always a limit."[42] This limit is what Camus terms "style." He states:

> The realist artist and the formal artist try to find unity where it does not exist, in reality in its crudest state, or in imaginative creation which wants to abolish all of reality. On the contrary, unity in art appears at the limit of the transformation that the artist imposes on reality. It cannot dispense with either. This correction which the artist imposes by his language and by a redistribution of elements derived from reality is called style and gives the re-created universe its unity and its boundaries. It attempts, in the work of every rebel, to impose its laws on the world, and succeeds in the case of a few geniuses. "Poets," said Shelly, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."
>
> Literary art, by its origins, cannot fail to illustrate this vocation. It can neither totally consent to reality nor turn aside from it completely.[43]

In a lesser known essay, "Helen's Exile," Camus traces his notion of limits back to Greece.

> Greek thought was always based on the idea of limits. Nothing was carried to extremes, neither religion nor reason, because Greek thought denied nothing, neither reason nor religion. It gave everything its share, balancing light and shade. But the Europe we know, eager for the conquest of totality, is the daughter of excess. We deny beauty, as we deny everything that we do not extol. And even though we do it in diverse ways, we extol one thing and one alone: a future world in which reason will reign supreme. In our madness, we push back the eternal limits, and at once dark Furies swoop down upon us to destroy. Nemesis, goddess of moderation, not of vengeance, is watching. She chastises, ruthlessly, all those who go beyond the limit.
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> The Greeks, who spent centuries asking themselves what was just, would understand nothing of our idea of justice. Equity, for them, supposed a limit, while our whole continent is convulsed by the quest for a justice we see as absolute. At the dawn of Greek thought, Heraclitus already conceived justice as setting limits even upon the physical universe itself: `The sun will not go beyond its bounds, for otherwise the Furies who watch over justice will find out.' We, who have thrown both universe and mind out of orbit, find such threats amazing. In a drunken

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[42]*Ibid.*, p. 269.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 269.

> sky we ignite the suns that suit us. But limits nonetheless exist and we know it. In our wildest madness we dream of an equilibrium we have lost, and which in our simplicity we think we shall discover once again when our errors cease--an infantile presumption, which justifies the fact that childish peoples, inheriting our madness, are managing our history today.[44]

Artists are free, of course, to create any image they wish, but not all creations satisfy the human obsession for unity. In order to sate the desire for unity without misguiding readers into a belief that reality itself is or can be somehow changed, the novel must conform to the demands of "style." Art, after all, is the creative outgrowth of the rebellion against the absurd and the world it creates reveals the intensity of the artist's rejection. Art ameliorates the absurd; it does not resolve it. If art provides a solution, if the confrontation with the absurd is denied, then it is merely another form of suicide. Art, as an expression of rebellion, is bound by ontological realities. Camus states: "It is the same thing with creation as with civilization: it presumes uninterrupted tension between form and matter, between evolution and the mind, and between history and values."[45]

Perhaps the most telling illustration of the importance of style for Camus can be found in his praise of Herman Melville.

> Like the greatest artists, Melville constructed his symbols out of concrete things, not from the material of dreams. The creator of myths partakes of genius only insofar as he inscribes these myths in the denseness of reality and not in the fleeting clouds of the imagination. In Kafka, the reality that he describes is created by the symbol, the fact stems from the image, whereas in Melville the symbol emerges from reality, the image is born of what is seen. This is why

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[44]Camus, "Helen's Exile," *Lyrical and Critical Essays*," pp. 148-49.

[45]*The Rebel*, pp. 270-71.

> Melville never cut himself off from flesh or nature, which are barely perceptible in Kafka's work.[46]

Style demands balance. If art is to achieve the end of alleviating the horror of the absurd without committing suicide, it must be a work bound by style. Camus states: "Any unity that is not a unity of style is a mutilation . . . stylization, [which] supposes the simultaneous existence of reality and of the mind . . . gives reality its form. Through style, the creative effort reconstructs the world, and always with the same slight distortion that is the mark of both art and protest."[47] Any creative act that "reconstructs the world" is bound by its style. In other words, true art produces its own limits. "[G]enius is a rebellion that has created its own limits."[48] Art not only appeases human desire for unity, it also teaches moderation. Through the recognition of what constitutes art, one realizes the need, importance, and irrefutable existence of limits. This is the significance of art for politics.

Camus foresaw the potential of art as a more appropriate means of reinvigorating symbolic existence because the novel provides unity without destroying the tensionality of existence. Legitimate art does not claim to violate ontological realities; indeed, art bound by style produces its own limits. With art, the human situation is not so much altered as it is infused, infused with hope and dignity. The struggle itself becomes the bearer of meaning and not some ultimate goal that so far transcends the human condition that it, in the end, denigrates day-to-day existence. He

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[46]Camus, "Herman Melville," *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, p. 293.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. 271.

[48]*Ibid.*, p. 271. (Emphasis added).

does not deny the possible existence of ultimate goals, but Camus's is a vision that heightens and glorifies human struggles.

Finally, Camus suggests that the recent turn to art, symbols, and narrative is a turn to the question of language. Looking for a new tragic language, many artists have reintroduced classical religion to the stage; "a logical thing to do. But this has [been] done by classical religious images, while the problem of modern tragedy lies precisely in the need to create *new sacred images.*"[49] While it makes sense to turn to classical religious images, unless such images and symbols are updated--reinvigorated--they will not resonate. The urge to "turn backward," to "[r]eturn to the Middle Ages, to primitive mentality, to the soil, to religion, to the arsenal of worn-out solutions" is not sufficient. "In order to be cured," Camus suggests, "we must make our peace with . . . this lucidity. . . . We must take into account the glimpses we have suddenly had of our exile. . . . There's a whole civilization to be reconstructed."[50]

Extending this to art, in order for new sacred images to resonate, they must conform to the demands of style, the need for balance. As Camus says of tragedy, "revolt alone is not enough to make tragedy. Neither is affirmation of the divine order. Both revolt and order are necessary, with one supporting the other, and each reinforcing the other with its own strength."[51]

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[49]Camus, "On the Future of Tragedy," *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, p. 308.

[50]Camus, *Notebooks: 1942-1951*, trans. Philip Thody, (New York: Paragon Books, 1991), pp. 15-16.

[51]*Ibid.*, p. 304.

The above paragraphs make it plain that Camus was both intentionally engaged in myth-making for philosophical, moral, and political purposes, and that he felt that symbols play a crucial role in making a myth or novel socially representative. Symbols have the unique ability to represent or articulate the fundamental experience of existence--as paradoxical--without lapsing into nihilism. Most important, it is apparent that Camus's conception of limits, which is generally agreed to be the cornerstone of his political thinking, emerges from his aesthetics in general and his views on symbols in particular. In short, Camus contends that both philosophic and political creations are bound by similar restraints as artistic creation. Politics, it appears, is similar to symbols in that both are bound and free.

Exile, Judgment, and Kingdom

Given that myth, symbol, and narrative play such a crucial role in Camus's thought, three symbols have been selected for examination in this dissertation. Exile, judgment, and kingdom were selected for a variety of reasons. First, it is significant that these symbols are conspicuous in the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions as well as in Camus's corpus. By comparing the original articulations of exile, judgment, and kingdom to Camus's treatment, it will be possible to see the degree to which Camus was engaged in *reinvigoration*. We have seen that Camus was consciously involved in returning to and reviving symbols for cultural, social, and political purposes. What did Camus keep in the symbols and what did he purge? In short, what does Camus mean by exile, judgment, and kingdom? This can only be discerned by examining his specific acts of reinvigoration.

Second, an important attribute of these symbols is their correlation with Camus's more well known themes: absurd, revolt, and *nemesis* or limits.[52] This correlation is important because Camus, as detailed in his *Notebooks*, was a highly self-conscious artist. Indeed, Camus designed his career to follow several strict stages of development. Each stage was to be comprised of at least one philosophic essay, one play or theatrical work, and one work of fiction, either a collection of short stories or a novel.

Camus's first stage was an examination of the absurd and is comprised of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Stranger*, and *Caligula*. During this stage he was content to describe the conditions, the effects, of the absurd. In an effort to highlight the seriousness of the situation, Camus's early works explore the typical responses to the absurd: philosophical or religious suicide. Indeed, *The Myth of Sisyphus* is not a presentation of the absurd as a solution; rather, *The Myth* is primarily an examination of the various illegitimate responses to the absurd. Camus's thorough analysis of contemporary existence, his diagnosis, does not come until his "revolt" works: *The Rebel*, *The Plague*, and *The Just Assassins*. It is in this second stage, that Camus begins to present authentic solutions. Although these solutions are tentative, Camus clearly asserts that there are legitimate social and political actions that can be taken. In short, Camus's revolt stage is both a diagnosis and a response. According to Camus's plan, the third stage was to be an explication of *nemesis*, which should be interpreted as incorporating both limits and judgment. The fourth stage was to involve a "certain kind

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[52]Camus, *Notebooks* 1942-1951, pp. 20-22, and p. 158.

of love," and the fifth would deal with "Creation Corrected or The System." Given that at the time of his death Camus had completed the first two stages only, there is considerable ambiguity as to what he intended in the later stages. There is also substantial confusion as to which cycle he was working on at the time of his death. *The Fall* and *Exile and the Kingdom* do not fit nicely into any of the cycles. Some scholars assert that Camus's adherence to this rather cyclical development had effectively broken down.

A close examination of Camus's entire corpus reveals that Camus did not abandon his framework or thematic cycles; rather, he *returned* to and *reworked* his initial works. (*The Stranger*, for example, is reworked in *The Fall*). Indeed, when his entire corpus is considered, including works that are often not systematically examined (his dissertation, philosophic and aesthetic essays, and early works of fiction), it is discovered that exile, judgment, and kingdom are the central issues in *all of Camus's works, early and late.*

Camus did not choose exile, judgment, and kingdom as the central symbols within his works for facile reasons. He felt that these symbols offered a response to the contemporary social and political malaise. Believing that contemporary existence is plagued by a uniquely pernicious form of isolation, Camus uses the symbol exile as the rubric to examine contemporary conditions. More pointedly, Camus contends that unless contemporary exile is properly diagnosed, it results in illegitimate judgments and actions. According to Camus, the atrocities of the twentieth century are a direct byproduct of false judgments of exile. Camus's narratives, then, are an effort to examine thoroughly the condition of exile and the forms of judgment it can and does

produce. Ultimately, Camus offers a more legitimate form of judgment, one that leads to what he considers an authentic vision of kingdom. Camus's more explicit use of the symbols exile, judgment, and kingdom was not a rejection of his early writings but a refinement. Exile is a more personal and evocative experience of the absurd; judgment is the fundamental ground of revolt; and kingdom building, for Camus, always embraced the limits of human endeavors.

Intending exile to be a presentation of the condition of contemporary existence, judgment as a diagnosis of that condition, and kingdom as a legitimate response, Camus offers a coherent political theory through his development of symbols. This is significant. Given that the symbolic aspects of Camus's thought have been largely ignored, it follows that previous appraisals of his political thought have been incomplete. This dissertation is an effort to provide a more complete understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Camus's political thought by examining his use of specific symbols.

Camus's Return and Reinvigoration

Scholars have not known what to make of Camus's use of Judeo-Christian themes. The left, and those who admired his exaltation of Greek and pagan virtues, characterize it as evidence of increasing conservativism. It is a difficult task, however, to connect *The Fall* and *Exile and the Kingdom* with religious orthodoxy or political conservatism. Ideological concerns account for much of the confusion. As previously mentioned, scholarship on Camus has been marred by various attempts--by both the left and right--to *utilize* his works for this or that ideological movement. Given that ideological commentators are more interested in the use of a text than in its

understanding, the most common response has been either to ignore entirely or to de-emphasize greatly one or the other "periods" of Camus's works. Typically, Camus's earlier themes of the absurd and revolt receive the most attention. When *The Fall* and *Exile and the Kingdom* are examined, they are either treated as inferior works or in virtual isolation. Perhaps it is this paucity of attention that has failed to discover the relationship between Camus's early and late works.[53]

While exile and kingdom are usually associated with the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is clear that Camus's conception was initially drawn from the Greek experience as expressed by the neo-Platonist Plotinus. This is significant for two reasons. First, it reinforces the notion that Camus's "switch" to Judeo-Christian symbols was not a switch at all. His entire corpus, from *The Right Side to the Wrong Side* to *The First Man*, deals with the symbols of exile, judgment, and kingdom. Second, Camus's attraction to Plotinus is due to a particular view of reason and art. Indeed, as we have seen, the notion that art fulfills functions that reason cannot, is central to Camus's thought. Intimately connected to concrete concerns, art is important for politics. This conviction never waned for Camus. Indeed, years later, he remarked

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[53]It should be noted that not all scholars have missed the connection between *The Stranger* and *The Fall*. See, for example, Rene Girard's "Camus's Stranger Retried," which first appeared in *PMLA* 79 (December 1964) 519-33 and was reprinted in "To double business bound": *essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 9-35. Girard goes to great lengths to demonstrate that Camus was dissatisfied with *The Stranger* and purposefully returned to and reworked the theme of judgment in *The Fall*.

that "[a]ll those who struggle today for liberty are in the final analysis fighting for beauty."[54]

Exile in the Greek Tradition

From Plato's anthropological principle to Aristotle's observation that a man who does not need a *polis* is either a beast or a god, the importance of citizenship in ancient Greece cannot be overemphasized. Unlike modern liberal societies, rights and obligations were not believed to emanate from the individual but rather the community. There were no guarantees, no protection, and no rights without citizenship. This is perhaps best illustrated by the ramifications of the loss of citizenship. In ancient Greece, "[n]o disgrace could be greater than being stripped of citizen rights (*atimia*)."[55] More pointedly, "[i]n the sixth and early fifth centuries to be in a state of *antimia* (*atimos*) was equivalent to being an outlaw: the *atimos* could be killed or robbed of his property without the possibility of legal redress."[56] The process by which one came to be declared in a state of *antimia* was complex and changed over time. The literal translation of *antimia* is dishonor, but it ranged in meaning from personal affront to loss of citizenship. These variances were a byproduct of the evolution of Greek society in general and Athens in particular.

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[54]Albert Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968, p. 152).

[55]Joint Association of Classical Teachers, *The World of Athens: An Introduction to Classical Athenian Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 153,

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 225.

Competition was valued throughout the history of ancient Greece but "the most important difference between the world of fifth-century Athens and that of the Homeric hero was that the nature of combat had changed radically."[57] With the introduction of the *phalanx*--which meant that personal prowess was less important than cooperation--"the arena for interpersonal rivalries shifted from the battlefield to other areas--to political, social and intellectual competitiveness."[58] Eventually, the public life of an Athenian, especially activity within the assembly, offered as many possibilities for recognition as did warfare. Such outlets had the effect of curbing violence, but competitiveness remained high. Winning was everything and in an effort to control envy, resentment, and revenge, institutional controls were developed. Such motivations were the motivations behind the evolution of *antimia*. Originally *antimia* meant the complete loss of citizen rights, but in time it constituted a less severe punishment. "Thus those citizens who were found guilty of sacrilege in 415 were sentenced to outlawry, not *antimia*; they were executed unless they fled abroad in time, their property was confiscated by the state and sold at public auction."[59] Differentiating between outlawry and antimia was an effort to make exile less heinous.

In this vein, the most famous modification of exile was the tradition of ostracism. Requiring a quorum of 6,000 votes, ostracism was an official act of the *ekklesia* that exiled a specific citizen for up to ten years. "The purpose of ostracism was to remove from the city the leader of a political faction which was hindering decision

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 225.

making. . . . As a result, ostracism allowed citizens to express their fear and envy of one more powerful than them."[60] While ostracism prevented political participation, neither he nor his family lost the rest of their citizen rights. These modifications demonstrate an effort to keep the threat of exile while reducing the practical costs. Nevertheless, exile was seen by Athenians as the most severe penalty aside from execution; and, as Socrates so famously illustrated, for truly loyal citizens, exile was more severe than even death.

It is hard for modern minds to conceive the significance of citizenship for ancient Greeks, especially Athenians. Myths of direct descendency from Ion, son of Apollo, and a legacy of always inhabiting Attica, gave Athenians a strong bond to their city. Exile did not simply concern a loss of rights but also a loss of heritage, a severing of familia bonds. The importance of ancestry was institutionalized in 451 by Pericles's citizenship law, which made the requirements for Athenian citizenship strict even by Greek standards. Renewed in 403, the law demanded that all Athenians citizens be men born of both an Athenian mother and Athenian father. Pedigree became more important than wealth or status.

A truly complete discussion of exile within the Greek context would need to examine the tragic poets and characters (particularly Oedipus), Plato, and perhaps Aristotle; but Camus's reliance on Plotinus as the representative of the Greek perspective of exile and homeland allows a narrower focus. I. H. Walker notes: "It was, indeed, in Plotinus that Camus encountered travel in an alien land as an allegory of the human condition, which, much modified, was to provide him with the two most

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[60]*Ibid.*, p. 142.

persistent symbols in his work, *patrie* or *royaume* and its counterpart, *exil*."[61] Walker goes on to note that in Camus's earliest collection of stories, *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*, a less self-conscious Camus clearly reveals Plotinus's influence. "Not surprisingly, Plotinus's image of life as exile from the *patrie* was to provide [the] important link between the essays."[62] An examination of Camus's dissertation, *Metaphysique chretienne et Neoplatonisme*, lends much credence to Walker's assertions.

Camus's analysis emphasizes that while "the love of God" clearly animated Plotinus, he was nevertheless a Greek. He states: "He is concerned about the fate of the soul, but he also wants, like his master [Plato] to give intellectual forms to becoming."[63] Plotinus' unique contribution, and what attracted Camus, "lies in confounding the state of the soul with the rational knowledge of things. What we have here is similar to what we find in psychoanalysis: diagnosis coincides with treatment. To bring to light is to heal, and to know the One is to return to one's *homeland*."[64] As an idealist, Plotinus saw this world as mere appearance--life on earth is exile because only reunion with the One, only the return to true unity, constitutes home--and "everything here below serves

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[61]I. H. Walker, "Camus, Plotinus, and *Patrie*: The Remaking of a Myth," *Modern Language Review*, v. 77:4, 1982, p. 834.

[62]*Ibid.*, p. 835.

[63]Albert Camus, "*Metaphysique chretienne et Neoplatonisme*," p. 125, included in Joseph McBride, *Albert Camus: Philosopher and Literature*, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1992).

[64]*Ibid.*, p. 125. (Emphasis added).

as a forceful reminder of the solitary homeland of the philosopher."[65] Given this, Plotinus's return had to take place within the soul; it required a conversion. Camus observed: "It is in the soul that the source of conversion is found. The soul is desire for God and the longing for a lost *homeland*. Life without God is merely a shadow of life. All beings strive toward God in the scale of Ideas and try once more to return to the source from which they came."[66]

What distinguishes Plotinus from Plato, however, is not an emphasis on the soul but rather his view of this world as good and the role art and beauty play in the conversion experience. One commentator describes Plotinus' contribution to Camus as a "sensibility" toward the world. Indeed, "Plotinus' conception of the natural world as good, and of creation as a source of joy, awakened an immediate sympathy in Camus."[67] Reveling in the natural world, casting the appreciation of earthly beauty as a stepping stone toward reunion with the One, does not differ from Plato in substance as much as it does in style. However, for Camus this difference in style is crucial. For example, Camus notes that while both Plato and Plotinus realized the necessity of using imagery to promote their thought,

> [i]n Plato the myths on the destiny of the soul seem to be superadded to and set alongside of strictly rational explanations. In Plotinus, the two procedures are one, and are inextricably interwoven, since they

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[65]*Ibid.*, p. 126.

[66]*Ibid.*, p. 133.

[67]Kristeen R. Andersen, "Justification and Happiness in Camus's *La Morte Heureuse*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, v. 20, 1984, p. 239.

> encompass basically the same reality. A difference that must be clearly understood, for it makes Plotinus unique in his time.[68]

Camus added that "for a Christian, art is not enough. . . . For a Christian who separates Reason from Beauty, the True from the Beautiful, Reason becomes merely the arbiter in questions of logic."[69] Thus the importance of Plotinus lies in the fact that his "philosophy is not merely a religious mode of thinking but an artist's way of looking at things as well. If things are intelligible, it is because things are beautiful."[70]

Ultimately, Camus's distinctions between Plotinus and Plato and Christianity are epistemological. For Plotinus, the "[i]ntellect lacks something, namely its unity. It is not self-sufficient, and this lack of self-sufficiency is the cause of its suffering and of its movement."[71] Rational thought could not achieve unity without reliance on images; but this fact was not unknown to Plato. What truly distinguishes Plotinus, at least for Camus, is "Plotinus reasons as an artist and feels as a philosopher, according to a reason utterly penetrated with light and in the face of a world in which intelligence breathes."[72] In short, Plotinus's view of reason lies midway between Plato and Christianity; it is imbued with, dependent upon, an artist's appreciation of beauty.

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[68]Albert Camus, "Metaphysique chretienne et Neoplatonisme," p. 139.

[69]*Ibid.*, p. 126.

[70]*Ibid.*, p. 126.

[71]*Ibid*, p. 134.

[72]*Ibid.*, p. 136. It should be noted that scholars have examined and criticized much of Camus's dissertation. For the most thorough treatment see Patrick Henry, *Voltaire and Camus: the Limits of Reason and the Awareness of Absurdity*, (Oxfordshire: Voltaire Foundation, 1975).

Exile in the Judeo-Christian Tradition

Throughout his life Camus kept a respectful distance from Christianity. On the one hand, he was often critical of Church authorities for their silence in the face of Nazism; he did not believe in messianism of any kind, transcendent or immanent; and he could not embrace a religion founded on the "sacrifice of the innocent." Yet, for most of his life he engaged in an intriguing converstation with Christians and Christianity. He was clearly taken by the figure of Jesus and his teachings; and he was equally absorbed by theological notions, such as sin and grace. That he chose exile, judgment, and kingdom as symbols worthy of examination and restoration, suggests Camus's strong attachment not just to ancient Greece but to ancient Israel as well. In order to comprehend the scope and depth of Camus's dependence on the Judeo-Christian understanding of these symbols it is first necessary to do what he did not; examine their ancient contexts and contemporary importance.

Exile is Old Testament. It is Jewish; or, more precisely, it is pre-Jewish. Christians have adopted the experience of exile and return along with the rest of the Old Testament, but it was initially the experience of a rather small group of Jews. Historically, it is the story of the destruction of the kingdom of Judah in 587 B.C., the banishment of some of the Hebrews to Babylon, and the eventual return and restoration of Jerusalem. Politically, it is the tale of miscalculation. Aligning itself with the waning Egyptian empire, the kingdom of Judah attempted to break loose from Babylon. Nebuchadrezzar would have none of it. Following the second revolt, the city of Jerusalem was razed. King Zedekiah was captured attempting to escape, forced to watch the execution of his sons, had his eyes gouged out, and was hauled to Babylon in

chains where he died in prison. Every important structure within the city, including Solomon's Temple and the Royal Palace, was burned. Thousands of citizens were rounded from their homes and marched off to Babylon.

While it is believed that only about thirty thousand out of two hundred thousand Judeans were forcibly exiled to Babylon, the *experience* of exile became representative. Such acceptance was only possible because of the compelling nature of the poetry of the prophets of Babylonian exile: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah. By creating narratives that transcended the narrow historical, political, and social contexts of the kingdom of Judah, the symbol of exile became representative for Jews, Christians, and, if Camus is correct, for atheists as well. The real importance of exile, then, is its *experiential connection*. The experience of catastrophic loss, of dislocation and grief, is perhaps best expressed in the lament:

> By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
>
> How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy![73]

The reasons why this body of literature have become representative are complex; however, one reason is the power of the poetry itself. The prophetic voices of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah are some of the most powerful in the Bible.[74]

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[73]*Psalm*, 137:1 & 4, Revised Standard Edition.

[74]Later in this chapter this point is analyzed in some detail by relying upon the works of Walter Brueggemann. He contends that the specific literary qualities of these three prophets accounts for the resonance of the symbols of exile and return.

Many scholars have pointed to specific characteristics of the Babylonian exile as well as other social and economic conditions as factors that allowed for the creation of such potent prophecies. First, those forcibly exiled were from the upper and artisan classes, and while they certainly endured hardships, after a time their skills allowed them to achieve some status. "Babylonian exile was unlike the earlier Egyptian experience. The people were not reduced to slavery, and they retained their sense of cohesion as a community."[75] This is significant. For out of the Babylonian exile came "some of the most brilliant prophetic statements of the biblical tradition and a cultic inventiveness which helped lay the foundations of postbiblical Judaism."[76] The fact that those exiled were not reduced to complete servitude or abject poverty paved the way for such creativity. In addition, while only a minority of Judeans experienced actual exile, a more general experience of dislocation was common. Long before the fall of Judah, Israelites had spread throughout the region and established themselves as tradesmen, craftsmen, or artisans. This dispersal was not forced; they could have returned to their native land whenever they wished; nevertheless, "a measure of the *shared sense* of being displaced is that, however they left, wherever they went, whether to Babylonia, Egypt, Moab, Amon, Samaria, or Assyria, all used the same term, *galut*, to describe their separation from the land."[77] *Galut* is a difficult term to define;

> [i]t is a physical place and a psychological state. Implicit in *galut* is the urge to return. *Galut* is also a basic category of biblical thought. Until

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[75]Daniel Jeremy Silver and Bernard Martin, *A History of Judaism* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 147.

[76]*Ibid.*, p. 147.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 146. (Emphasis added).

> modern times, Hebrew lacked an appropriate term for voluntary settlement outside of Israel (*tefutzah*), and language thus reveals the prejudices of piety. If over the centuries a Jew wished to speak of life in the scattering of Jewish settlements as legitimate, he had to use a Greek term, "Diaspora."[78]

Clearly, a central element to the experience of exile is dislocation; but physical displacement is not all there is to exile and return. For if physical dislocation was essential to exile, the symbol could not have become representative for Jews, Christians, and others. After all, only a relatively small number of Judahites underwent the original exile, and most Jews and Christians throughout the ages have not experienced physical dislocation. Yet, exile and return are some of the most enduring symbols within the Bible. Indeed, one scholar, analyzing the various strains of Judaism, commented that while there have been many Judaisms, "all Judaic systems have recapitulated a single experience: the exile and return suffered by some Jews between 586 and 450 B.C."[79] He goes on to assert that the reason that these events have become paradigmatic is that "[t]hese events are understood to stand for exile, identified with everything people find wrong with their life, and return, marking what people hope will happen to set matters right."[80] In short, exile and return are representative because of the repeated and shared experience of "finding the world out of kilter

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[78]*Ibid.*, p. 146.

[79]Jacob Neusner, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Exile and Return in the History of Judaism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p. 1.

[80]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

("exile"), but then making it possible to live in the interim."[81] Exile and return have come to symbolize the effort to "escape, overcome, and survive."[82]

Of all the interpretations of this literature, however, the one most pertinent to Camus is Walter Brueggemann's *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile.* Brueggemann contends that 587 B.C.E is decisive; it "embodies a most peculiar and important disjunction in the traditions of the Old Testament."[83] In short, it is "pivotal." Biblical traditions differ before and after this event. Prior to 587 B.C.E., prophets relied on the old traditions, the old actions of God. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah break this practice by "proclaim[ing] a new beginning with fresh actions from God that are wrought in this moment of exile, in this crisis of dismantling."[84] The new events and actions are not obvious. Part of the genius of these prophets is precisely their ability to grasp that God was acting in *new* ways; but "[t]hese poets not only *discerned* the new actions of God that others did not discern, but they *wrought* the new actions of God by the power of their imagination, their tongues, their words. New poetic imagination evoked new realities in the community."[85] Brueggemann

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[81]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

[82]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

[83]Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 1.

[84]*Ibid.*, p. 2.

[85]*Ibid.*, p. 2. Brueggemann is using "imagination" in a specialized fashion. Prophetic imagination involves the ability to evoke a shift in consciousness, to question the dominant culture, and present an alternative vision of reality. In short, imagination is not ethereal but has the potential to change societies. See Brueggemann's *Prophetic Imagination*, 1978.

characterizes exile as "pivotal" not because it relates to this or that historical or political event, but because of its *metaphorical power*. The significance of 587 B.C.E is that it is "a way of speaking about the end of *any* known world, about the dismantling of *any* system of meaning and power."[86] While not slighting the theological significance, Brueggemann argues that the biblical traditions of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah, present an artistic or imaginative attempt to recast the world--socially and politically as well as theologically. All three prophecies see the new world "under the twin aspects of *relinquishment* and *receiving*."[87] Thus, each prophet must prompt the relinquishment of the previous social, political, cultural, and religious assumptions before a new world, a new perspective, can be received. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah, must experience and articulate exile first and build later. Because exilic literature explicitly deals with the death of one perspective and the birth of a new one, and given the current malaise--one where "[a] variety of scholars are calling attention to the prospect that Enlightenment modes of power and Enlightenment modes of knowledge are at the end of their effective rule among us"--Brueggemann contends that contemporary societies might well benefit from reexamining the intent, structure, and power of these prophetic traditions.[88] This is precisely what he provides.

While all three traditions deal with both relinquishment and receiving, there is a different character and focus to each prophet's vision. Beginning with Jeremiah,

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[86]Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 4.

[87]*Ibid.*, p. 4.

[88]*Ibid.*, p. 5.

Brueggemann observes that "[f]rom the outset it is clear that there will be resistance to the God who dismantles and to the prophet who carries the dismantling word. The resistance may be against the resolve of God, but . . . the resistance will be focused upon Jeremiah who brings the message of God's resolve. Thus in his very call, Jeremiah is designed by God for conflict."[89] Set in turbulent times, positioned between the dominant culture and the will of God, Jeremiah's "testimony is a tale of grief."[90] He lists grievances, laments the blindness of his contemporaries, and refuses to be seduced by easy solutions. Jeremiah realizes that there is no program that can be embarked upon, no set of steps which can be taken, that will prevent Babylonian expansion, the destruction of Davidic-Jerusalem, or the exile of his people. But despite his near absorption by grief, ultimately Jeremiah is a prophet of hope. "Jeremiah's vitality comes precisely from his passionate conviction about the power of God to work a newness in the zero hour of loss and exile."[91] A prophet of pathos, Jeremiah understands that "*[o]nly grief permits newness.*"[92]

Ezekiel's vision is suprarational. It is a vision of a God wholly transcendent, wholly other. God will not be trivialized by pedestrian attempts to discover the "utility" of his actions. Given the bizarre character of the times, the most common questions of the day were: Why? Why would God allow such destruction? Such suffering? Ezekiel's answer is that Judah is not in proper relation with God. "Judah did not let

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[89]*Ibid.*, p. 12.

[90]*Ibid.*, p. 33.

[91]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

[92]*Ibid.*, p. 41.

God be God."[93] Judah had become selfish and needy, portraying God as existing for their sake, as existing *in* Jerusalem; but God is free and cannot be confined by temples, churches, or dogma. "In Ezekiel, God is not for us as much as God is for God's self."[94] The people of Judah forgot God's holiness, they presumed too much. For this, God left. Ezekiel's prophecy was an attempt to rearticulate God's holiness, to reestablish the proper relation between God and his followers. "Ezekiel has vitality for his ministry because he is able to discern the enormous mismatch between the *disinterested holiness* of God and the *utilitarian unrighteousness* of Israel."[95] Clearly, the unrighteousness of Israel is incompatible with God's holiness. Obedience to God's commandments and will are necessary for a proper relationship; but this is too much to ask. Judah, like all nations, cannot become righteous. Therefore, "it is important that God's holiness yield hope not measured by Judah's obedience. . . . More elementally, holiness is not an ethical but a theological category."[96] Ezekiel is telling God's followers to focus less on their relation to God and more on God. Brueggemann remarks, "[w]e are so preoccupied with God's relatedness, God being for us, that we do not attend enough to God's hiddenness."[97] A rebuke of utilitarian and ideological perspectives, Ezekiel's message is that hope springs from holiness. Some things must remain hidden. For

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[93]Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 69.

[94]*Ibid.*, p. 54.

[95]*Ibid.*, p. 57.

[96]*Ibid.*, p. 71.

[97]*Ibid.*, p. 71.

Ezekiel, this otherness is crucial to authentic hope. "Hope based in temple and dynasty reduces God to patron rather than sovereign. Ezekiel makes the more difficult case that hope depends precisely on the opposite. Hope depends on God *not* having such a commitment, because new possibility depends on God not being so confined or restricted or committed."[98] For Ezekiel, hope emerges out of mystery, out of holiness.

Brueggemann warns that while Deutero-Isaiah--a more explicit prophet of hope and homecoming--offers a more attractive vision than Jeremiah or Ezekiel, his prophecy cannot be understood in isolation. He states:

> The power of the hope found in this poetry is not likely to be felt without the conflict of Jeremiah and without the toughness of Ezekiel. The promises are not available to us or effective for us while we are people who cling to the old city and to old organizations of reality. To use the poetry of homecoming without the prior literature of *exile* is an offer of cheap grace.[99]

In other words, *the experience of exile is crucial to authentic judgment as well as to the creation and acceptance of a new perspective.* But "exile in the ancient world or in our own situation is not an obvious, flat, social fact. It is a decision one must make. It is a very specific, self-conscious reading of social reality."[100] The prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, while perhaps not as comforting, are essential to Deutero-Isaiah's success. This is not to suggest that Deutero-Isaiah does not also address exile. The central task of Deutero-Isaiah was to address homecoming, "[b]ut in order to do that, the poet had

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[98]*Ibid.*, p. 81.

[99]*Ibid.*, p. 90.

[100]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

to convert Babylonian Jews into exiles, to persuade displaced people that after two generations, this is still not home."[101]

Once exile is established, Deutero-Isaiah's prophecy emphasizes the theme of *homecoming*. "It was the peculiar vocation of Deutero-Isaiah to construct poetic scenarios of alternative reality outside the prosaic control of the empire. These fresh alternatives liberated Jewish exiles to think differently, act differently, speak differently, and to sing differently. In the end, Babylonian definitions of reality lost their absoluteness and their authority because this poetry served to subvert the absoluteness."[102] By offering alternative views of reality, Deutero-Isaiah undermined the dominant social order. Such a process, however, is not easy. In order for a vision to become subversive, it must first become representative; it must become accepted. Brueggemann states: "The triggering of this new social possibility is a poetic articulation of an alternative social reality that at first lives only in the mind and heart of the poet but begins to form a community ready in various ways to disengage from the dominant reality."[103] Because alternative visions must garner communal acceptance, they cannot be arbitrary or subjective. According to Brueggemann, the specific reason why Deutero-Isaiah became representative is its reliance on memory and tradition. He asserts that "memory is the only ground which makes an alternative scenario . . . credible."[104] By rekindling the memory of his people, Deutero-Isaiah undercuts the

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[101]*Ibid.*, p. 111.

[102]*Ibid.*, p. 95.

[103]*Ibid.*, p. 96.

[104]*Ibid.*, p. 112.

absoluteness of the Babylonian empire. His "alternative tale is a threat to the empire because it asserts not only that it used to be different but that it could be different in the future."[105] By appealing to a forgotten past, the poet attempts to elicit an entirely new perspective of reality; but a mere recital of past events will not suffice. History is not up to the task because "[t]he poetry does not describe what is happening. Rather it evokes images and invites perceptions in Israel that were not available apart from this poetry."[106] Poetic imagination is vital because the prophet is not asking Jews to return to the past, but long for a future. It is precisely the open endedness of the prophecy that gives it the potential to evoke a real shift in consciousness.[107] Thus, when Brueggemann asserts that only memory allows authentic possibilities, he is using "memory" in a specific manner. Memory is only effective when it is combined with imagination. In other words, memory and tradition must be cast in new ways, with new interpretations, in order to be relevant to current circumstances. Visions of alternative realities must be open ended; they must rely on the past without being captive to it. In short, they must be bound and free.

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[105]*Ibid.*, p. 112.

[106]*Ibid.*, p. 96.

[107]This observation is not unique to Brueggemann or the prophets. For a discussion concerning the importance of imagination and vision in political theory see Sheldon Wolin's *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), especially pages, 17-21. Wolin describes an architectonic vision as "one wherein the political imagination attempts to mould the totality of political phenomena to accord with some vision of the Good that lies outside the political order." (p. 19) In other words, an imaginative vision points toward the future.

This analysis of exilic literature is instructive for an examination of Camus in several respects. First, the discussion of exile as metaphorical, in "finding the world out of kilter ("exile"), but then making it possible to live in the interim," is obviously applicable to Camus. Camus's entire corpus deals specifically with a world out of kilter and the struggles to "correct creation." Second, the dual meanings within the symbol exile, involving both relinquishment and receiving, is reminiscent of Camus's usage of revolt. Revolt is not simply opposition, but the acceptance of others as an authentic community striving for a common cause. Camus notes that "though it springs from everything that is most strictly individual in man, [rebellion] questions the very idea of the individual. . . . Therefore he is acting in the name of certain values which are still indeterminate but which he feels are common to himself and to all men."[108] In other words, revolt also consists of relinquishment and receiving. Finally, and most important, is Brueggemann's summary of the three prophets of exile and return: (1) Jeremiah teaches that newness comes out of grief; (2) Ezekiel counters utilitarian and ideological perspectives by asserting the holiness of God; and (3) Deutero-Isaiah reveals that only "memory" allows authentic possibility. Camus's position is not very different and can be summarized as follows: (1) grief is a fact; exile is the condition we are in; (2) reality is absurd and cannot be resolved through utilitarian logic or ideological pronouncements; and (3) only by revitalizing traditional symbols, only through the use of "memory" in Brueggemann's sense, can any solace be achieved. Camus understood that in order to discuss the possibilities of authentic kingdoms, legitimate political communities, he must first explore the condition of exile. This is

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[108]Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 15.

precisely what he attempts in *The Stranger*, *Caligula*, *The Fall*, and *Exile and the Kingdom*. Camus comprehended the lessons of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah. "Finding the world out of kilter," he attempted to make it possible to live in the interim.

Conclusion

Utilizing both his fiction and nonfiction, the next three chapters are an explication of Camus's use of the symbols exile, judgment, and kingdom. As an examination of exile and judgment, chapter four deals with *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*, *The Stranger*, and *The Fall*. Chapter five is an examination of exile and rebellion and focuses on *The Rebel* and parts one through four of *The Plague*. Part five of *The Plague* and all of *Exile and the Kingdom* comprise chapter six. It is in this chapter that Camus's vision of exile and kingdom, his social, cultural, and political solution, is advanced. Throughout the analysis, it is important to remember the inter-relatedness of these symbols. At no time should any of these symbols be seen in isolation; all three symbols are present in each stage of Camus's work. After all, any kingdom not informed by the experience and diagnosis of exile is an offer of "cheap grace."

For everything to be consumated,
for me to feel less alone, I had only
to wish that there be a large crowd
of spectators the day of my execution
and that they greet me with cries of hate.
Albert Camus, *The Stranger*.

Chapter Four
Exile and Judgment

While some balk at the notion that something "unique" occurred in the twentieth century, Albert Camus was absolutely convinced. For one thing, the scale of violence and destruction was unprecedented. In 1951, Camus observed:

> Of course, the twentieth century has not invented hatred. But it cultivates a particular variety, dispassionate hatred, wedded to the mathematics of large numbers. The difference between the massacres of the innocents and our settling of accounts is a difference of scale. Do you know that in twenty five years, from 1922 to 1947, 70 million Europeans, men, women, and children have been uprooted, deported, or killed? That is what has become of the land of humanism which, despite all protests, we must continue to call ignoble Europe.[1]

As the world staggered from World War II into the Cold War--a time polarized by two superpowers capable of totally destroying the planet and squared off in global confrontation--the notion that something had changed, that a new era had arrived, was compelling. The century, begun in hope and optimism, with a firm faith in progress and human development, was shaken to its core by its very potential.

In short, it is no accident that separation or exile was a constant theme in Camus's works. The twentieth century has seen the most massive disruptions, forced migrations, and hideous atrocities in history. Alienation was surely the shared passion of Camus's day, and it has waned little since his death. It has changed forms, perhaps,

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[1]Albert Camus, *Actuelles II*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1942-51), p. 33.

taken on more innocuous guises; but alienation, the condition of exile in all its varied forms and ramifications, is still the condition that must be combated. Camus recognized this early on and in response to being called an existentialist remarked that "we shall keep it only in a converted form--we shall say inexistential philosophy, which does not involve a negation but aims merely to report on the state of `the man deprived of '. . . . Inexistential philosophy will be the philosophy of exile."[2] Camus, then, was not an existentialist but rather an "inexistentialist"; and his work was a response to the human condition of "the man deprived of ." That is, Camus truly developed a philosophy of exile.

A Stranger to Myself and the World

Camus's first philosophic treatment of the "uniqueness" of the twentieth century is *The Myth of Sisyphus*. While typically thought of as dealing with the absurd, a close analysis establishes that the real significance of the work, especially in terms of politics, is that the absurd *leads to exile*.

As demonstrated in chapter three, Camus presents the absurd as a human sensibility. Desiring to know the whole yet forever limited by human rationality, "the absurd depends as much on man as it does on the world."[3] More a description of the human condition than a philosophical category, Camus's interest in the absurd lies in its *existential affects*. This focus on the human ramifications of the absurd should not be

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[2]Albert Camus, *Notebooks: 1942-1951*, trans. Philip Thody, (New York: Vintage International, 1988), p. 81.

[3]Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vingage Books, 1955), p. 21.

surprising. Camus's interest in philosophy was always as a guide for human action. His justification of suicide as the most serious philosophical question is illustrative.

> I have never seen anyone die for the ontological argument. Galileo, who held a scientific truth of great importance, abjured it with the greatest ease as soon as it endangered his life. . . . On the other hand, I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others pardoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living. . . . I therefore conclude that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions.[4]

The Myth of Sisyphus is not a systematic analysis of the root causes of the absurd; it is, primarily, a work that explores reactions to the absurd. Camus makes this clear in his opening remarks. Following his epigraph from Pindar, Camus writes:

> The pages that follow deal with an absurd sensitivity that can be found widespread in the age--and not with an absurd philosophy which our time, properly speaking, has not known. . . . [I]t is useful to note . . . that the absurd, hitherto taken as a conclusion, is considered in this essay as a starting-point. In this sense it may be said that there is something provisional in my commentary: one cannot prejudge the position it entails. There will be found here merely the description, the pure state, of an intellectual malady.[5]

This intellectual malady is, of course, the confrontation with the absurd. Convinced that the absurd sensitivity is the shared passion of the day, and committed to finding a justification for action, *The Myth of Sisyphus* is an exploration of possible responses to the absurd. He declares: "The subject of this essay is precisely this relationship between the absurd and suicide, the exact degree to which suicide *is a solution* to the absurd."[6] Solutions are not born in a vacuum, however; the absurd has

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[4]*Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 2.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 6. (Emphasis added).

profound affects. "From the moment absurdity is recognized, it becomes a passion, the most harrowing of all. But whether one can live with one's passions, whether or not one can accept their law, which is to burn the heart they simultaneously exalt--that is the whole question."[7]

The notion that the absurd has profound existential ramifications is not a new thesis. What has previously been neglected, however, is the fact that caught "[b]etween the certainty I have of my existence and the content I try to give to that assurance, the gap will never be filled. Forever I shall be a *stranger to myself.* In psychology as in logic, there are truths but there is no truth. Socrates' `Know thyself'. . . . reveal[s] a nostalgia at the same time as an ignorance."[8] Undermining all forms of knowledge, individual as well as universal, the absurd makes "[a] *stranger to myself and to the world,* armed solely with a thought that negates itself as soon as it asserts, what is this condition in which I can have peace only by refusing to know and to live, in which appetite for conquest bumps into walls that defy its assaults? To will is to stir up paradoxes."[9] Not simply a presentation of the absurd, *The Myth of Sisyphus* argues that *exile* is the condition of contemporary existence. In terms of political theory, the most disturbing effects of the absurd is that it induces intense isolation. Unable to come to terms with oneself, let alone with a larger community, how is it possible to create an authentic politics? Camus's analysis of reactions in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is, in the end,

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 20. (Emphasis added).

an analysis of this query; it is the beginning of his political thought. Exiled from ourselves and others, is politics possible in an absurd world?

In the second section of the work, "Absurd Walls," Camus confronts the shared perspective of the day by briefly dealing with several philosophers. Dismissing the details and differences between such diverse thinkers as Heidegger and Kierkegaard, Camus claims that "it is possible and sufficient in any case to bring out the *climate that is common to them.*"[10] Briefly examining Heidegger, Jaspers, Chestov, Husserl, and Kierkegaard, Camus declares that "[a]ll these experiences confirm one another. The mind, when it reaches its limits, must make a judgment and choose its conclusions. This is where suicide and the reply stand. . . . The experiences called to mind here were born in the desert that we must not leave behind. It is essential to know how far they went."[11] Convinced that all these thinkers faced the same reality, that divorce between "human need and the unreasonable silence of the world," Camus is interested in their solutions. What were their judgments? "To say that the climate is deadly scarcely amounts to playing on words. Living under that stifling sky forces one to get away or stay. The important thing is to find out how people get away in the first place and why people stay in the second."[12]

Emphasizing that the absurd is a product of confrontation, Camus, quite logically, asserts that "to destroy one of its terms is to destroy the whole."[13] In other

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[10]*Ibid.*, p. 23.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 27.

[12]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 30.

words, the absurd cannot be settled. "Everything that destroys, conjures away, or exorcises these requirements . . . ruins the absurd and devaluates the attitude that may then be proposed."[14] In order to be honest, to remain lucid, one must live in the face of the absurd. This is the key to the attitude that Camus is exploring in the work; and, according to Camus, most shrink from this demand.

For example, Camus argues that existentialists, without exception, opt for escape. Dealing with Jaspers, Chestov, Kierkegaard, and Husserl, Camus argues that while beginning with a realization of the absurd, ultimately they all embrace miraculous solutions. "Through an odd reasoning, starting out from the absurd over the ruins of reason, in a closed universe limited to the human, they deify what crushes them and find reason to hope in what impoverishes them."[15] This act of deification, committed "through a blind act of human confidence," is what Camus calls a "leap." This amazing turn is most notable in Kierkegaard, who is "swallowed up in his God," but Camus asserts that each of these thinkers makes such a leap. This is significant because "[t]he moment the notion transforms itself into eternity's springboard, it ceases to be linked to human lucidity."[16] This death of human consciousness is what Camus calls "philosophical suicide."

The Myth of Sisyphus, then, is intended to find out if "it is possible to live *without appeal.*"[17] Camus asserts that it is possible. Simply put, the surest way to

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[14]*Ibid.*, p. 31.

[15]*Ibid*, p. 32.

[16]*Ibid.*, pp. 33-50.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 52. (Emphasis added).

maintain the absurd, is to live. "Living is keeping the absurd alive. . . . One of the only coherent philosophical positions is thus revolt."[18] With this in mind, Camus turns to various forms of revolt, various "absurd men." Dealing first with Don Juanism, then drama, and finally with conquerors, Camus notes that he is not suggesting codes of behavior. Rather, his forays are an effort to see if it is possible to live without appeal. These examples demonstrate, and "[t]he imagination can add many others, inseparable from time and *exile*," that there are people, "who likewise know how to live in harmony with a universe without future and without weakness."[19]

Returning to the existential affects of the absurd, Camus admits that the confrontation with the absurd cannot be faced without assistance. While there are other means of bolstering one's attitude, Camus offers art as the best resource. This is, again, because art reveals that living without appeal does not mean that there are no limits, no guidelines, and no means to judge. The demands of art, the self-generating limits of art, demonstrate that even in an absurd world, even though we each are exiled, there are legitimate and illegitimate actions.

To exemplify the importance of art in general and the symbol in particular, Camus ends his first philosophical treatise with the myth of Sisyphus. Camus's Sisyphus is different, however. Instead of being a myth of eternal punishment, this new Sisyphus "is stronger than his rock."[20] This is because while alone, while forever condemned to a life of futile struggle, Sisyphus rebels not merely for his own sake.

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[18]*Ibid.*, p. 54.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 92. (Emphasis added).

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 121.

Camus's recasting of this myth is an effort to breathe life into contemporary struggles. Sisyphus's message is clear: despite being a stranger to oneself and the world, one can transcend exile. After all, one revolts in the name of others.

Essays in Isolation

The Wrong Side and the Right Side is Camus's first literary treatment of exile and homeland.[21] From an old woman's paralysis that makes her an exile to herself and to her family, to a grandmother too harsh and too demanding to be loved, "Irony" is the story of individuals exiled in the most intimate surroundings--home, community, and family. The message of the story is that one need not be forced from home by some imperial or tyrannical power, exile occurs in the most familiar places.

"Between Yes and No" builds on this theme as Camus examines a relationship--perhaps autobiographical--between a grown man and his silent mother. Exploring the simultaneous experience of solitariness and solidarity, the story deals with a crisis of confidence. Following an assault on his mother in her own apartment by some unknown assailant, "he realized how much they had been alone that night. Alone against the others. The `others' were asleep, while they both breathed the same fever."[22] The stark realization that he could be alone in his home town, alone in his family,

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[21]Published by Edmund Charlot in 1937, as the second title in a series called *Mediterraneennes*, only three hundred and fifty copies of *The Wrong Side and the Right Side* were printed. Given its limited distribution, the short stories are often overlooked. Increasingly, scholars are noting the similarities in themes as well as style in his more famous early works, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger*.

[22]Albert Camus, "Between Yes and No," *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 35.

spawned a crisis in his soul. "He had never felt so lost. The world had melted away, taking with it the illusion that life begins again each morning."[23]

"Death in the Soul" extends the examination of crises of identity by focusing on the existential aspects of travel. Alone in a strange and melancholic land, a man spirals down into himself. Looking for homelands in baroque churches, restaurants, and strangers, eventually he reaches his end: "I had gone as far as I could. I had no more country, city, hotel room, or name. Madness or victory, humiliation or inspiration--was I about to *know* or be destroyed?[24] Saved momentarily by the arrival of friends, this man eventually concludes that only the natural world offers solace.

"Love of Life" also examines the effects of travel and joys of the natural world. For

> [w]hat gives travel its value is fear. It breaks down a kind of inner structure we have. One can no longer cheat--hide behind the hours spent at the office or at the plant . . . which protect us so well from being alone. . . . Travel robs us of such refuge. Far from our own people, our own language, stripped of all our props, deprived of our masks . . . we are completely on the surface of ourselves.[25]

Nevertheless, the anonymous character is not distraught by these facts. Imbued with hope by a variety of sources, from the joys of a raucous barroom to the gentle moments of dusk, he realizes that "[t]here is no love of life without despair of life."[26] He chooses to live for the "Love of Life."

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[23]*Ibid.*, p. 35.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 47.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 54.

[26]*Ibid.*, p. 56.

In *The Wrong Side and Right Side*, Camus examines the paradox of existence. Relating to a woman who spent her meager inheritance on a marble tomb, which eventually so captivates her that she longs for death, Camus emphasizes the need to come "face to face with the wrong side of the world."[27] While no one wants to make a choice between the wrong and right side, the key is not to cheat. "The great courage is still to gaze as squarely at the light as at death."[28] In short, we must accept that life is paradoxical. "In spite of much searching," Camus admits, "this is all I know."[29]

Throughout these essays, Camus finds solace in the natural world. This exaltation of the natural world is important and it distinguishes Camus from Plotinus and Christianity; "[f]rom the start, there was never any question of a heavenly father in Camus's vision of the fatherland."[30] For Camus, return to God is not viable. In these early writings, and even more pronounced in "Nuptials," Camus's pagan and sensual sensibilities reign. He states: "for me, this country held no promise of immortality. What would be the point of feeling alive once more in the soul, if I had no eyes to see Vicenza, no hands to touch the grapes of Vicenza, no skin to feel the night's caress on the road from Monte Berico to the Villa Valmarana?"[31]

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[30] I. H. Walker, "Camus, Plotinus, and *Patrie*," p. 835.

[31] Albert Camus, "The Wrong Side and The Right Side," *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 50.

It is significant that even in these most pagan of his writings Camus recognizes limits to this perspective. The desire, the metaphysical need, for unity was recognized even this far back. In addition to reinforcing the fact that exile, judgment, and home are the foundation of his works, these essays exemplify Camus's staunch conviction to maintain a connection with *this* world. For Camus, any "solution," any rush to judgment, that neglects this world must be denied. The beauty of the hills, the regenerative power of the sea, sun, and stars, are not to be omitted or overlooked. He declares: "I love this life with abandon and wish to speak of it boldly: it makes me proud of my human condition."[32] The realization that the glories of this world are not complete, that they do not constitute a total explanation, does not diminish their importance. He states: "Why, in its presence, should I deny the joy of living, *as long as I know everything is not included in this joy*? There is no shame in being happy."[33] Indeed, the natural world inspires; it initiates. He declares: "Tipasa testifies to something, and does it like a man. Tipasa is the personage I'm describing today. . . . There is a time for living and a time for giving expression to life. There is also a time for creating, which is less natural."[34]

Aware that the need to transfigure, to correct creation, can be achieved only by art in general and the novel in particular, Camus experiments in these early essays and gives a less controlled expression to exile, judgment, and home. The pervasive sense of

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[32]*Ibid.*, p. 69.

[33]*Ibid.*, p. 70. (Emphasis added).

[34]*Ibid.*, p. 70.

isolation that Camus explores in these early short stories was given much fuller treatment in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger.*

Exile and Condemnation

The Stranger has been interpreted in many ways. From Sartre's linkage of *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and existentialism, to Bree and Lynes's view of the work as social protest, to Fitch's and Barthes's emphasis on the text, it has been treated by the various trends within philosophy and literary criticism.[35] While the title invites such an analysis--*e'tranger* means "person whose nationality is not that of a given country; person who does not belong, or is considered not to belong to a family or clan; person with whom one has nothing in common"--exile and home have received scant scholarly attention. This is not to suggest that exile is wholly overlooked. Indeed, quite the opposite is true. Virtually every interpretation mentions exile or isolation in one way or another; but, inevitably, exile is pushed to the margins, seen as a subtext and not as the focal point of the work.[36] This is a mistake.

It began with Sartre's interpretation. Unaware of Camus's larger purposes or literary cycles, he argued that *The Stranger* was not intended to prove anything. To a

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[35]The most recent interpretations of *The Stranger* include Jerry L. Curtis's emphasis on Camus's marginalization of Arabs, "Cultural Alienation: A New Look at the Hero of *The Stranger*, *Journal of American Culture*, v. 15, 1992, Robert R. Brock's thesis that the death penalty is the overriding message, "Meursault the Straw Man," *Studies in the Novel*, v. 25, 1993, and various poststructuralist or postmodern readings, see in particular Ben Stoltzfus, "Camus's *L'Etranger*: A Lacanian Reading," *Studies in Literature and Language*, v. 31, 1989.

[36]English Showalter, Jr., uses this definition to point out the difficulty of translating the title in his work, *The Stranger: Humanity and the Absurd*, (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1989), p. 22. The definition itself is derived from Petit Robert's standard French dictionary.

degree, Sartre is correct. As an effort to describe the experience of the absurd, to explore the condition of contemporary existence, *The Stranger* cannot "prove" anything. However, Camus's nonfiction writings and subsequent scholarly analysis make it clear that the work was intended to set the stage; *The Stranger* was designed to pave the way for Camus's "solution" to the absurd, *The Plague*. Seen in this light, as a progression from the individual to community, it is apparent that exile and kingdom are central symbols of both *The Stranger* and *The Plague*.

Further evidence that "exile" and "home" are prominent themes within *The Stranger* lies in the intimate connection between it and *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*. For example, *The Stranger* clearly builds on the theme of being an exile in the most intimate surroundings and relations. A virtual conglomeration of all the characters within *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*, Meursault is the epitome of an exile. He is a mystery to everyone. No one understands him, not his lawyer, not the magistrate, not his co-workers, not Celeste, not Raymond, not Marie, and while we can only surmise, he was probably an enigma to his mother as well. Meursault, then, is another presentation of an exile in the midst of community, family, and friends. Alone, despite appearances to the contrary. Additionally, Meursault's "solution" to exile is the same hedonistic one offered in Camus's earlier essays. His only peace comes from the sun, sea, and other sensual pleasures. As both a continuation and extension of *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*, *The Stranger* explicitly confronts exile and home.

It must be noted, however, that *The Stranger* is more than a simple reworking of Camus's early essays. There is something new, something more ominous, about *The*

Stranger. *The Stranger* differs from the early essays in that this is the first of Camus's works to deal systematically with the absurd. To this extent, Sartre is correct; Camus's philosophizing, the insights of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, shape the novel. Indeed, Meursault *is* an exile because of the absurd. More directly, Meursault is an exile for two specific reasons: (1) he observes the world through the prism of the absurd and (2) he is unable or unwilling to communicate his views. These two facts assure Meursault's isolation.

From the beginning of the novel it is obvious that Meursault views the world differently. Initial signs, however, like his languid reaction to his mother's death, do not reveal the whole story. Only as the novel proceeds does it become apparent that Meursault adheres to a radically different perspective. Meursault believes that the sequence of events, his actions and the actions of others, are purely arbitrary and unimportant. For example, after receiving the gun from Raymond and pondering staying at the beach house or walking back down the beach, Meursault remarks: "To stay or go, it amounted to the same thing."[37] By ordinary standards of cause and effect, of actions and repercussions, this is insane. Staying or going, shooting or not shooting, matters; or at least it matters to most people. But Sartre and Girard are correct, the novel is an exploration of absurdity and Meursault is a highly stylized character. He is the embodiment of an attitude, an attitude in contrast with traditional perspectives. Meursault is a new voice. He is the voice of the absurd. While there is a certain honesty or lucidity to Meursault--not crying at his mother's funeral, seeing a Fernandel

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[37] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

comedy, having a liaison with Marie, or falling asleep during the vigil, will not mitigate the harsh reality of death--his perspective is not shared.

The most blatant illustration of Meursault's isolation can be seen in his difficulty to communicate. While we learn during the trial that Meursault is articulate and educated, he continually worries about miscommunication. Whether he says, "[i]t's not my fault" when it is inappropriate or feels the need to "justify" himself to others, Meursault has trouble communicating. Moreover, he is clearly aware of his deficiency. For instance, early in his relationship with Marie, he worries about how she might react when she learns of the recentness of his mother death: "I felt like telling her it wasn't my fault, but I stopped myself because I remembered that I'd already said that to my boss."[38] In short, despite the flatness of the novel, despite Meursault's inattentiveness to the rituals and manners of civilized existence, Camus makes it clear that Meursault is, at least to some degree, aware of his situation. This element of self-consciousness is significant because it reinforces his isolation. Unable to express himself effectively, Meursault seems resigned to being continually misunderstood. At various important moments in the novel, Meursault seems reconciled to the fact that he cannot persuasively present his perspective. In short, he is an exile and he knows it.

In the early part of the novel, his isolation and lack of communication do not seem particularly important; but in those settings where he is being *judged*, during his interviews with his lawyer, the magistrate, and the priest, his failure to communicate and their inability to relate is crucial. In many ways, his inability to explain or justify his perspective, leads directly to his execution. For example, in his second encounter,

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[38] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

the magistrate states: "'What interests me is you. . . . There are one or two things,' he added, 'that I don't quite understand. I'm sure you'll help me clear them up.'" [39] The magistrate is ostensibly motivated by good intentions; and it is quite plausible that if Meursault played the game, if he responded in ways that made sense to the magistrate, his case would have been tried differently. Again, Meursault is conscious of the magistrate's benevolent intentions: "he stood up and told me wanted to help, and that, with God's help, he would do something for me."[40] But as the magistrate attempts to get Meursault to explain why he fired the four superfluous shots and Meursault remains silent, the tension begins. It is then that the two perspectives, Meursault's and society's, clash.

Meursault is both aware of and impressed by the magistrate's efforts to understand; he thinks "I was about to tell him that he was wrong to dwell on it, because *it really didn't matter.*"[41] Before Meursault can discuss the arbitrariness of existence or the absurdity of modern life, however, the magistrate launches into a tirade, a justification of *his* perspective. In short, he does not truly desire to understand Meursault; rather he wants to "help" Meursault by bringing him into accord with God, by convincing him of the veracity of his perspective. Meursault relates the experience in the following way:

> But he cut me off and urged me one last time, drawing himself up to his full height and asking me if I believed in God. I said no. He sat down indignantly. He said that it was impossible; all men believe in God, even

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[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 67. (Emphasis added).

> those who turn their backs on him. That was his belief, and if he were ever to doubt it, his life would become meaningless.[42]

Meursault's refusal to adopt the magistrate's perspective is subversive; it threatens the magistrate's conception of himself and the world. This is why he gets so agitated. Given the magistrates understanding of Christianity, Meursault's refusal means that he is doomed. The magistrate's view is total; you either adopt his Christian view of the world or you are forever condemned, forever guilty. Meursault's unique perspective and his inability to express himself clash with the magistrate's total perspective. Ultimately, it is Meursault's isolation, his unwillingness to embrace society's conception of reality, that results in condemnation.

The trial itself provides even more striking examples of miscommunication. Meursault is astonished by several aspects of the proceedings. First, the trial seemingly takes place without his involvement. He states: "One thing bothered me a little, though. . . . I felt like intervening every now and then, but my lawyer kept telling me, `Just keep quiet--it won't do your case any good.' In a way, they seemed to be arguing the case as if it had nothing to do with me. Everything was happening without my participation."[43]

This exclusion becomes even more severe later when his lawyer, during summation, actually assumes his identity: "`It is true that I killed a man.'" He went on like that, saying `I' whenever he was speaking about me. I was completely taken aback. I leaned over to one of the guards and asked him why he was doing that. He told me to

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[42]*The Stranger*, p. 69.

[43]*The Stranger*, p. 98.

keep quiet, and a few seconds later he added, `All lawyers do it.' I thought it was a way to exclude me even further from the case, reduce me to nothing, and, in a sense, substitute himself for me."[44]

When Meursault is allowed to participate, he fails to convey himself properly. "The presiding judge cleared his throat and in a very low voice asked me if I had anything to add. I stood up, and since I did wish to speak, I said, almost at random, in fact, that I never intended to kill the Arab."[45] Grappling for some way to assist Meursault, the judge remarks that at least this admission was something, and then attempts to deduce the "cause" of Meursault's act. "Fumbling a little with my words and realizing how ridiculous I sounded, I blurted out that it was because of the sun. People laughed. My lawyer threw up his hands."[46] Again, Meursault's inability to express himself is damning.

As the focus of the trial moves from the murder of the Arab to the real reason Meursault is on trial, his lack of remorse and sensitivity, larger issues emerge. The prosecutor does not concentrate on the facts of the case, on the crime itself, but on Meursault's soul. "And I tried to listen again, because the prosecutor started talking about my soul. He said that he had peered into it and that he had found nothing."[47] The indictment continues along the same vein: "It was then that he talked about my attitude toward Maman. He repeated what he had said earlier in the proceedings. But it went

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[44]*Ibid.*, p. 103.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 102.

[46]*Ibid.*, p. 103.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. 101.

on much longer than when he was talking about my crime."[48] Such disproportionate treatment reveals that the prosecutor's case is not based on concrete evidence, but on his ability to "peer" into Meursault's soul. It is not just the prosecution, however, that assumes the awesome power of discerning souls. Meursault chides his own lawyer for similar pretensions. He states: "Besides, my lawyer seemed ridiculous to me. He rushed through a plea of provocation, and then he too talked about my soul. . . . `I, too,' he said, `have peered into this man's soul, but unlike the esteemed representative of the government prosecutor's office, I did see something there, and I can assure you that I can read it like an open book.'"[49]

This alleged power to ascertain the content of a human soul *fundamentally warps the judgment of the court and society.* Presuming to have powers well beyond the scope of human capability, this tainted form of judgment begins with exclusion, moves to condemnation, and ends in execution. The prosecutor's closing arguments are illustrative. Merging Meursault's crime with an upcoming and highly publicized patricide trial, the prosecutor asserts that "a man who is *morally* guilty of killing his mother *severs* himself from society in the same way as the man who raises a murderous hand against the father who begat him."[50] The prosecutor then urges the jury not to be swayed by humane sentiments because while pursuing the death penalty is distressing, perhaps even morally ambiguous, Meursault is not to be judged by the same standards. "He stated that *I had no place in a society* whose most fundamental rules I ignored and

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[48]*Ibid.*, p. 101.

[49]*Ibid.*, p. 103.

[50]*Ibid.*, pp. 101-102. (Emphasis added).

that I could not appeal to the same human heart whose elementary response I knew nothing of. `I ask you for this man's head,' he said, `and I do so with a heart at ease.'"[51]

Meursault is not condemned for the murder of the Arab, nor for the four superfluous shots; rather, he is tried, condemned, and executed for having a deformed soul, for playing by different rules, for having different standards. In short, Meursault is executed because he is an exile, because he has "no place in a society whose fundamental rules [he] ignored." Presumably, if Meursault had cried at his mother's funeral, if he had not gone to a Fernandel film, and if he believed that staying or going, shooting or not shooting, mattered, the trial would have reached a different, a more lenient, verdict. In order to ease consciences, the prosecuting attorneys attempt to exclude Meursault. The warping effects exclusion has on judgment is not lost on the prosecution; they know that if they can effectively sever Meursault from the community, the jurors will be more likely to give him the death penalty.

It is significant that those who judge Meursault presume to have the power of looking into a man's soul and judging--either for or against--him on such a basis, because it means that *The Stranger* is not just an exploration of exile and absurdity, it is also an explicit treatment of the ability or inability to know the human soul. It is an argument about epistemology and judgment. Plotinus argued that the only path to true knowledge of self and soul was through a reunion with God. Plato and St. Augustine have similar arguments. While Camus does not share the faith of these thinkers, he did respect a central tenet of their teachings: human knowledge is not capable of knowing the human soul with certainty. Anyone who claims the ability of judging on such

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[51] *Ibid.*, p. 102. (Emphasis added).

criteria is wrong. *The Stranger* is not a condemnation of *all* judges; it is a warning about judges who claim to know too much. *The Stranger* is a rejection of a certain kind of judgment.

This admonition can best be seen in Camus's treatment of Meursault and the priest near the end of the novel. At this point in the novel, as Meursault struggles to keep his emotions in check, the austerity of prose and perspective disappears. As his end draws near, he fights wild dreams of a last minute reprieve, of a last minute appeal. His old arsenal of justifications--that choices and consequences are arbitrary, life is meaningless, and actions are unimportant--are increasingly ineffective.

> I would always begin by assuming the worst: my appeal was denied. "Well, so I'm going to die." Sooner than other people will, obviously. But. . . . Deep down I knew perfectly well that it doesn't much matter. . . . In fact, nothing could be clearer. Whether it was now or twenty years from now, I would still be the one dying. At that point, what would disturb my train of thought was the terrifying leap I would feel my heart take at the idea of having twenty more years of life ahead of me.[52]

Fear of death cannot be rationalized away. The end pits the heart against the mind. It is under these conditions, immediately following such a struggle, that the priest confronts Meursault for the last time. Trying to get Meursault to accept God but continually being frustrated, the priest finally challenges him:

> Do you really love this life as much as all that?" he murmured. I didn't answer. He stood there with his back to me for quite a long time. His presence was grating and oppressive. I was just about to tell him to go, to leave me alone, when all of a sudden, turning toward me, he burst out, "No, I refuse to believe you! I know that one time or another you've wished for another life." I said of course I had, but it didn't mean any

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[52] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

> more than wishing to be rich, to be able to swim faster, or to have a more nicely shaped mouth. It was all the same.[53]

It is the priest's final comment that instigates Meursault. "'Yes, my son,' he said, putting his hand on my shoulder, 'I am on your side. But you have no way of *knowing it, because your heart is blind.* I shall pray for you.'"[54] This is another example of judgment that is not possible. The priest cannot peer into Meursault's heart and he cannot be certain. As if to demonstrate this point, Camus has Meursault explode: "He seemed so certain about everything, didn't he? And yet none of his certainties was worth one hair on a woman's head. He wasn't even sure he was alive, because he was living like a dead man."[55]

Camus was not putting Meursault forth as a standard bearer. He was well aware of the deficiencies of Meursault's hedonist sensibilities and his egoism. This is, perhaps, why Camus has Meursault fire four extra shots when he kills the arab; Meursault is no more correct than society. Seemingly just to be sure, Camus ends the novel with Meursault "last wish." He does not go to his death with indifference in his heart. Meursault wavers. He too judges and judges completely: "For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate."[56] In the end, Meursault's solution, to simply accept the absurd and approach life with

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[53]*The Stranger*, p. 120.

[54]*Ibid.*, p. 120. (Emphasis added).

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 120.

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 123.

indifference, is too severe; the air is too rarefied for human existence. Meursault's community turns out to be extreme egoism punctuated by hatred. Society will hate him the way he loathes them. Yet solidarity will not grow from hatred; and Meursault's solution is just as offensive as society's. It condemns too roundly, too absolutely. It is too exclusive.

The lack of resolution in *The Stranger* is intentional. The work is designed to explore the character, the conditions, of modern existence. Symbolizing these main currents in absurdity and exile, Camus attempts to subvert the certainty so typical of modernity. Locked in battle against one another, Meursault and society *exclude* each other's perspective. Such deformed perspectives are a byproduct of exile. Unwilling to consider any perspective in contradistinction to its own, society tries and executes Meursault for being different, for being an exile. Isolation leads to a deformed form of judgment. Indeed, both Meursault and society claim to know too much. Such epistemological errors, Camus emphasizes, lead to illegitimate forms of judgment; and illegitimate judgment prevents an authentic community from being formed. *The Stranger* is not primarily an examination of the absurd; rather, it is an exploration of the effects of exile on judgment.

Transposed Judgment

While overlapping themes, subtle allusions, and the use of potent symbols are characteristics of all of Camus's fiction, *The Fall* is undoubtedly his most complex work. Part autobiography, part indictment of French and European intellectuals, and part expiation and penance for the torments of Algeria, it is also a return to and reworking of *The Stranger*. Indeed, it should be noted that the structure of the two

novels is similar. The pivotal event in both works--Meursault's murder and Clamence's self-awareness--occurs at the center of each work. While the straight forward division of *The Stranger* gives way to the more complicated flashbacks of *The Fall*, both works are clearly divided into two distinct parts. Judgment, or escaping judgment, is the focus of the latter part of each work. Like *The Stranger*, *The Fall* immediately suggests the theme of exile. Such a theological reference--the fall of man resulting in Adam and Eve's exile from Eden, God, and self--provided by a professed atheist, is but the first example of Camus's ironic references. After all, the central character is Jean Baptiste or John the Baptist, essentially the precursor of Christ himself; and the concentric canals of Amsterdam are clearly intended to be reminiscent of Dante's circles of hell. While all of Camus's ironic intentions are difficult to untangle, his use of "the fall" is clear; he is utilizing one of the most dramatic Biblical references, the fall of man, to emphasize the plight of contemporary existence: exile.

Utilizing overt references to exile, yet mixing his metaphors in an obscure fashion, Camus's treatment of exile is both more complicated and more blatant in *The Fall*. As the novel develops, Clamence's self-imposed exile from Paris becomes the most obvious allusion, but several early remarks presage this theme. The gathering place for Clamence's soliloques on judgment takes place in a seedy bar in Amsterdamn called *Mexico City*. Mixing Biblical and evolutionary references, Clamence compares the bartender to a Cro-Magnon man. He says: "Fancy the Cro-Magnon man lodged in the Tower of Babel! He would certainly feel out of his element. Yet this one is not

aware of his exile."[57] Commingling evolutionary motifs with yet another potent symbol of exile and dislocation from the Bible, the Tower of Babel, and contrasting Cro-Magnon man's self-consciousness with modern human's, Camus presents exile or dislocation as the central theme of the work. Much like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah, Camus must awaken his contemporaries to their exiled condition. Awakening modern humans to their situation, however, is no easy task. Indeed, the blatant mixing of Biblical and evolutionary references is a sign of the seriousness of the situation. Most modern humans are too engrossed in reading newspapers and fornicating to achieve the self-consciousness of a semi-evolved humanoid. In an effort to startle humans into realizing their condition, Camus uses blunt analogies and metaphors for their shock value.

As mentioned, Clamence is the plainest evidence that exile is the major theme of the work. Returning to the Plotinian theme of travel first used in "Death in the Soul," Clamence sits in the seedy *Mexico City* bar and awaits other Frenchmen. Realizing that travelers will experience a sense of dislocation, Clamence waits. He is not seeking friends nor is he there to assist. Clamence seeks accomplices. He seeks foils that can be utilized to alleviate, however briefly, his own desperate exile and isolation. Clamence, like Meursault, is a presentation of extreme egotism.

Unlike the biblical reference, Clamence's exile is brought on not by action but inaction. He is a self-imposed exile. Once a prominent Parisian lawyer, an advocate of

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

"widows and orphans," Clamence lived a more than enviable life.[58] Filled with self-confidence and assurance, he achieved the greatest of feats: he dominated without seeming to. One night changed everything, however. Walking across a bridge after midnight, he eyed a young woman leaning over the rail. Upon walking some fifty yards, he heard the sound of a body strike the water, followed by several shrill cries. The guilt, the self-awareness, and the crack in his self-confidence that resulted from his inaction, his cowardice, undermined him.[59] The fact that it was such a private affair, that he did not have his notoriety to consider, delayed his fall; but the event turned his attention inward. Questioning everything, Clamence saw vice behind virtue, self-interest behind generosity, and guilt everywhere. No longer believing in innocence, no longer trusting anyone--he felt the world was laughing at his misfortune--he set out to expunge his guilt.

Having tried the solutions set forth in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "Actor, Don Juan, conqueror--he fit . . . all these roles," yet continuing to hear laughter, Clamence tries love, chastity, and debauchery.[60] Each avenue he pursues only reinforces his derisive view. Love leads to "simultaneous loves," which in the end results only in pain for

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[58]Jean Baptiste Clamence is a pseudonym, a pretense. We never learn his real name.

[59]Actually, several months prior, Clamence thought he heard laughter behind him. Turning to see who was laughing and why, no one was there. The fact that Clamence did not turn his attention inward until after his failure on the bridge, is another example of the seriousness of the situation. Contemporary humans will not face the truth, even a truth they overtly experience, until they are forced. It seems that Clamence's self-consciousness required a blunt instrument as well.

[60]Susan Tarrow, *Exile from the Kingdom: A Political Rereading of Albert Camus*, (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1985), p. 160.

others. In short, "far from finding myself transported and absolved in the whirlwind--as the saying goes--of passion, I added even more to the weight of my crimes and to my deviation from virtue."[61] This is not to say that Clamence did not at times believe that he found his cure. In time, "I became a little fatter and at last was able to believe the crisis was over. Nothing remained but to grow older."[62] The final blow, however, occurred during one of his many "treatments." Aboard an ocean liner with a liaison, Clamence's inner demons get the best of him. Seeing a black speck on the horizon, he cannot suppress the feeling that it is a drowning person. "Then I realized that, calmly as you resign yourself to an idea the truth of which you have long known, that that cry which had sounded over the Seine behind me years before had never ceased . . . . I had to submit and admit to my guilt. I had to live in the little-ease."[63]

Clamence's complete loss of confidence in himself and human kind leads him to his last solution: judgment. Deriding the notion of the Last Judgment, Clamence sees himself and everyone else trapped and tortured by perpetual *human* judgment. Whether stuffed in a little-ease or immobilized in a spitting-cell, we all rush to judge everyone else before they judge us. Spit in their face before they can spit in yours, is Clamence's solution and it prompts him to move to Amsterdam and become a "judge-penitent."

In short, Clamence's self-awareness leads to exile. As a lawyer assisting the downtrodden of Paris, he felt part of a larger community. His conviction, that human

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[61]Albert Camus, *The Fall*, p. 101.

[62]*Ibid.*, p. 107.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 109. The little-ease was a torture device of the Middle Ages. A dungeon cell built too low to stand erect and too narrow to lie down in, it forced one to stand forever at an angle.

judgment is more severe, or at least more certain, motivated Clamence's move to Amsterdam. Relishing the city's horizontal landscape, complete with its concentric canals and meant to signify Dante's circles of hell, Clamence mistakenly sets out to for a "community" out of judgment. His confessions are designed to undermine the confidence of others, to reveal the innate and inescapable duplicity and guilt of human beings, so as to reveal the condition of contemporary existence: exile. The facade of community, the feeling of solidarity, is false. It is a mask. Clamence plans to tear down the veils of ignorance and innocence. In short, he seeks to create a community of exiles.

This passion to expose everyone as guilty can be seen in several parts of the book; however, no scene is more illustrative, more startling, than Clamence's appraisal of Christ. Asking and answering in the same breath why Christ was crucified, Clamence remarks:

> The real reason is that *he* knew he was not altogether innocent. . . . If he did not bear the weight of the crime he was accused of, he had committed others--even though he didn't know which ones. Did he really not know of them? He was at the source, after all; he must have heard of the Slaughter of Innocents. The Children of Judea massacred while his parents were taking him to a safe place--why did they die if not because of him? . . . . Knowing what he knew, familiar with everything about the man--ah, who would have believed that crime consists less in making others die than in not dying oneself!--brought face to face day and night with his innocent crime, he found it too hard for him to hold on and continue.[64]

Clamence intends to expose all innocence as false; everyone, in Clamence's eyes, is guilty.

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[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

As Susan Tarrow points out, Clamence's "solution," his so-called shift in consciousness, is merely the flip side of absolutism. Clamence's "All or Nothing" view of the world has not altered. There is no real difference in switching from the belief that all are innocent to notion that all are guilty. This is the turn that Caligula took; and it is, in reality, no turn at all. It is still an "All or Nothing" proposition. This is why Clamence must undermine everyone's innocence, even Christ's. "Clamence thinks only in absolutes" and his turn is three hundred and sixty degrees.[65] He is no closer to community at the end of the novel than he is at the beginning. Resigned, Clamence continues to live in exile because "It's too late now. It will always be too late. Fortunately!"[66]

The Fall, then, is a more explicit examination of the theme of *exiled judgment.* Clamence is the evolution of the characters in *The Stranger* who claim the ability to peer into human souls. Clamence judges everyone. Cloaking himself in the imagery of hell, Clamence seeks to set himself apart, to rise above the others and assume the supreme power to judge. In short, Clamence aspires to be God. His description of the feeling he gets when he judges absolutely is illustrative:

> Then I grow taller, *tres cher*, I grow taller, I breathe freely, I am on the mountain, the plain stretches before my eyes. How intoxicating to feel like God the Father and to hand out definitive testimonials of bad character and habits. I sit enthroned among my bad angels at the summit of the Dutch heaven and I watch ascending toward me, as they issue from the fogs and the water, the multitude of the Last Judgment. They rise slowly; I already see the first of them arriving. On his bewildered face, half hidden by his hand, I read the melancholy of the common condition and the despair of not being able to escape it. And as for me, I

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[65]Susan Tarrow, *Exile from the Kingdom*, p. 162.

[66]*The Fall*, p. 147.

> pity without absolving, I understand without forgiving, and above all, I feel at last that I am being adored![67]

An examination of "the curious transposition peculiar to our times," *The Fall* is an examination of the peculiar state of exile that affects contemporary existence. More to the point, however, *The Fall* is an effort to expose the dangers of *exiled judgment.* Arrogant and self-serving, Clamence wishes to supplant God. It is this form of judgment, so pervasive throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that Camus exposes in *The Fall.*

Conclusion

The motivations behind *The Stranger* and *The Fall* were identical. Camus hoped to expose the wanting condition of human existence as well as the ersatz character of the political regimes of his era by exploring various visions of exile and kingdom. The ideological movements and regimes of the time did not, despite their persistent protestations to the contrary, offer legitimate communities. Offering absolutism as a replacement for authentic adjudication, the various characters in *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*, Meursault in *The Stranger*, and Clamence in *The Fall*, are all an effort to demonstrate the horrific results of such pursuits. A community cannot be based on hate, the desire to dominate, or other false kingdoms. Communication, authentic dialogue, must be present.

Visions of kingdom, Camus asserts, are intimately connected to visions of exile. No starry eyed romantic, Camus is painfully aware that exile, a particularly heinous form of exile, is the condition that modern humans endure. Any hope of establishing an

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[67] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

authentic kingdom, hinges on properly identifying or perceiving this condition. *The Stranger*, *The Fall*, and parts of *Exile and the Kingdom* are efforts to convey the message that false perceptions of exile lead to false kingdoms. Camus's perspective of what constitutes an authentic diagnosis of contemporary exile, and therefore appropriate forms of rebellion and judgment, is handled in *The Rebel* and *The Plague*.

To escape this fate, the revolutionary mind, if it wants to remain alive, must therefore return again to the sources of rebellion and draw on its inspiration from the only system of thought which is faithful to its origins: thought that recognizes limits.
Albert Camus, *The Rebel.*

Chapter 5
Exile and Rebellion

Camus was particularily troubled by the judgment of twentieth century philosophical and political movements. In the past, when tyrants were recognized as tyrants by both others and themselves, "judgment remained unclouded. But slave camps under the flag of freedom, massacres justified by philanthropy or by a taste for the superhuman, in one sense cripple judgment. On the day when crime dons the apparel of innocence--through a curious transposition *peculiar to our times*--it is innocence that is called upon to justify itself."[1] Realizing that such times call for new responsibilities and actions, Camus announced that "the rebirth is in the hands of all of us. It is up to us if the West is to bring forth any anti-Alexanders to tie together the Gordian Knot of civilization cut by the sword."[2] This is precisely what Camus attempts to do with the symbols exile, judgment, and kingdom. Exploring the unique experience of his era through symbols borrowed from ancient Greece and Judaism, Camus attempts to reveal the possibilities for authentic social and political communities, communities that have the lucidity to call a crime a crime and innocence innocence.

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[1]Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower, (New York: Vintage International, 1984), p. 4. (Emphasis added).

[2]Albert Camus, "Create Dangerously," *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage International, 1988, p. 269.

The previous chapter and such assertions as Carl Viggiani's, "that Fall and Exile are at the center, not only of the cycle of Judgment, but of Camus' creative consciousness in its totality," establish that exile, judgment, and kingdom are the dominant themes of his corpus.[3] Believing that the experience of homelessness in the twentieth century was dramatic or pivotal in Brueggemann's sense--as the death of one perspective and birth (or rebirth) of a new one--Camus did more than simply reveal the illegitimacy of exiled judgment. Camus diagnosed the contemporary condition in an effort to pave the way for the re-establishment of authentic social and political communities. In short, Camus's diagnosis is an attempt to *revitalize authentic judgment*. While Camus examined the unique aspects of the twentieth century throughout all of his writings, his most systematic treatment is *The Rebel*.

Adjudicated Revolt

Believing that changes in philosophy, art, and religion were at the root of the social and political disasters of the twentieth century, Camus wrote *The Rebel* as a diagnosis. "The purpose of this essay" Camus remarks, "is to face the reality of the present."[4] Starting with the assumption that revolt is a universal human experience and action, and then presenting a brief history of rebellion, *The Rebel*, ultimately, is an effort to determine "whether . . . refusal can only lead to the destruction of self and

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[3]Carl Viggiani, "Fall and Exile: Camus 1956-1958," in *Albert Camus*, ed. Raymond Gay-Crosier, (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 1980), p. 270.

[4]*The Rebel*, p. 3.

others." "Our purpose is to find out whether innocence, the moment it becomes involved in action, can avoid committing murder."[5]

Scholars have long recognized that the key to the political critique of *The Rebel* is Camus's distinction between rebellion and revolution. Arguing that rebellions are bound by inherent limitations whereas revolutions know no bounds, this distinction eventually reveals the importance of *limits* in Camus's political theory. Indeed, for Camus, it is precisely the modern passion that recognizes no limits, driven by an urge to deny and bent on absolute negation, that "is the particular form of madness [that] has given our times their forbidding aspect."[6] While many scholars have examined rebellion and the importance of limits in detail, what has thus far been neglected is the role solitude, or exile, plays in Camus's understanding of revolt and judgment.

Beginning in solitude but progressing into an act of solidarity in the name of all men and women, revolt is a reaction against human suffering and unjust conditions. This urge to resist injustice is crucial; indeed, for Camus rebellion is constitutive of human nature: "In order to exist, man must rebel."[7] "But the nature of revolt," according to Sir Herbert Read in his *Foreword* to *The Plague*, "has changed radically in our times. It is no longer the revolt of the slave against the master, nor even the revolt of the poor against the rich; it is a metaphysical revolt."[8] In Camus's words, "[t]he revolution based upon principles kills God in the person of His representative on earth.

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[5]*Ibid.*, p. 4.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 248.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 22.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. viii.

The revolution of the twentieth century kills what remains of God."[9] This, perhaps, would not be so catastrophic except once modern humans believe they have eliminated God, they assume the role of ultimate arbiter. This usurpation is significant; it is *the* characteristic of modern revolt. Camus observes:

> Every religion revolves around the concepts of innocence and guilt. Prometheus, the first rebel, however, denies the right to punish. Zeus himself, Zeus above all, is not innocent enough to exercise this right. Thus rebellion, in its very first manifestation, refuses to recognize punishment as legitimate. But in his last incarnation, at the end of his exhausting journey, the rebel once more adopts the religious concept of punishment and places it at the center of his universe. The supreme judge is no longer in the heavens; history itself acts as an implacable divinity.[10]

In other words, *as the forms of revolt change, so do the types of judgment.* Given the heinous ramifications of twentieth century judgment, *The Rebel* is an effort to understand the causes of modern, metaphysical, revolt and its effects on judgment.

Beginning his treatment of metaphysical rebellion with the Greeks, Camus notes that traditional rebels *defy* while modern rebels *deny.* For example, Prometheus's revolt and condemnation was a result of his unwillingness to ask forgiveness from Zeus; and while he resisted Zeus to the end, Prometheus's rebellion "does not range . . . against all creation, but against Zeus, who is never anything more than one god among many." For the Greeks, to rebel against nature, to deny being, was a sign of insanity. "To rebel against nature amounted to rebelling against oneself."[11] Seeing self-laceration as a fruitless endeavor, the Greeks distinguished authentic revolts from illegitimate ones on

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[9]*Ibid.*, p. 246.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 241.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 27.

the basis of moderation. In other words, classical rebellion "is a question of settling a particular account, of a dispute about what is good, and not a universal struggle between good and evil."[12]

As the Greek faith in nature and the good declined, as theocracies faded and secular governments became the norm, it became increasingly difficult to ground philosophy, society, and politics in metaphysical or divine justifications. In Nietzsche's words, "God is dead and we killed him." In strictly political terms, the results have been catastrophic. Rushing to fill the void left by the "death of God," humans cease to deny and begin to aspire. In short, and as John Cruickshank observes, "[t]he death of God was followed by the deification of man."[13]

From the "dandies" of romanticism, through the rejection of salvation by Ivan Karamazov, to the absolute negation of Sade and Stirner, the passion of modernity--the urge to deny--spread through the art, literature, religion, and philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Influenced, whether consciously or not, by the prevailing faith in reason, modern nihilists pushed negation to its logical consequences. Eventually, all modern rebels strive for absolute negation.[14] But denial of everything is

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[12]*Ibid.*, p. 27.

[13]John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 102.

[14]The issue of moderation is one of the best known and most explored aspects of Camus's thought. Indeed, Camus's respect for the ancient Greeks derived, in large part, from their conception of moderation. The Greek recognition of and respect for moderation is what allowed them to achieve balance and live relatively harmonious lives. Moderation played an even more important role for Camus, however; moderation informed the Greek sense of judgment. Camus noted that "[i]n their universe there were more mistakes than crimes, and the only definitive crime was excess. In a world entirely dominated by history, which ours threatens to become, there are no longer any

virtually impossible. Indeed, for Camus no revolt is truly nihilist--asserting no positive values--except for suicide. Even the most extreme revolts, even those that fervently and self-consciously embrace nihilism, even those that set out to negate human existence itself, in the end reaffirm human existence. According to Camus, even "[t]he destruction of man once more affirms man. Terror and concentration camps are the drastic means of man to *escape solitude*."[15]

While every revolt begins with an individual act of rebellion, the assertion of a standard, of positive values, is a communal act. In other words, every act of rebellion is the beginning of, the urging for, community. After all, Prometheus rebelled for more than himself; he also rebelled for the benefit of mankind. He was the "'Enemy of Zeus . . . for having loved mankind too much.'"[16]

As the philosophical developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries make the experience of solitude more extreme, as rebellion changes from defiance to denial and God disappears from the heavens, humans are left to counter the injustice of the world by themselves. While in some sense liberating, this new condition is also deeply disconcerting. Turning to Nietzsche, Camus states:

> In this world rid of God and of moral idols, man is now alone and without a master. . . . From the moment that man believes neither in God nor in immortal life, he becomes "responsible for everything alive, for everything that, born of suffering, is condemned to suffer from life." It is he, and he alone, who must discover law and order. Then the time of *exile* begins, the endless search for justification, the aimless nostalgia,

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mistakes, but only crimes, of which the greatest is moderation." (*The Rebel*, p. 28).

[15]*The Rebel*, p. 247. (Emphasis added).

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 26-27.

> "the most painful, the most heartbreaking question, that of the heart which asks itself: where can I feel at home?"[17]

Faced with new responsibilities and unable to turn to a divine ground, modern rebels try to create new foundations. They struggle to establish new laws, values, and norms all in an effort to assuage this new, especially harrowing, form of exile. According to Camus, Nietzsche is one of the very few who grasped the gravity of the situation. Realizing that "if eternal law is not freedom, the absence of law is still less so," Nietzsche knew that he, and all who follow, must struggle to fill this new void.

Camus's connection with Nietzsche is complicated, and requires further clarification. According to Camus, Nietzsche's philosophy does not lead to Ivan Karamazov's "everything is permitted" but rather to an extreme asceticism: "if nothing is true, nothing is permitted." In other words, if there is no way to avoid crime, if sin is inevitable, then how can one act, how can one escape judgment? This train of thought clearly influenced Camus. These are precisely the questions driving not only Nietzsche but Clamence, *The Rebel,* and all modern revolts. Yet, despite Camus's admiration for Nietzsche as a diagnostician, he rejects his solutions. Camus realizes that Nietzsche's asceticism, which eventually leads to a deification of *fate*, is simply the replacement of one God by another. He observes that

> [t]he world is divine because the world is inconsequential. That is why art alone, by being equally inconsequential, is capable of grasping it. It is impossible to give a clear account of the world, but art can teach us to reproduce it--just as the world reproduces itself in the course of its eternal gyrations. The primordial sea indefatigably repeats the same words and casts up the same astonished beings on the seashore. But at least he who consents to his own return and to the return of all things,

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[17] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

> who becomes an echo and an exalted echo, participates in the divinity of the world.[18]

For Nietzsche, since salvation is not granted by God, it must be achieved by man. "Since the world has no direction, man, from the moment he accepts this, must give it one that will eventually lead to a superior type of human." Camus is well aware that the bugle call for superior men is the first step toward granting humans the power of ultimate arbitration. Ironically, Nietzsche, who began by denying action and judgment, points toward a progressive program that effectively elevates human judgment as ultimate. This is the path to revolution and it is precisely the type of *judgment* that Camus rejected.[19]

Even though Camus's rejects much of Nietzsche's thought, he praises Nietzsche as a diagnostician and for accepting the new responsibilities. Instead of ignoring contemporary situation or pining for nostalgic solutions, Nietzsche recognizes and attempts to respond to the plight of contemporary existence. Significantly, Nietzsche did not create this situation but is simply responding to it. Camus notes: "Stirner, and with him all the nihilist rebels, rush to the utmost limits, drunk with destruction. After which, when the desert has been disclosed, the next step is to learn how to live there. Nietzsche's exhaustive search then begins."[20] In short, Nietzsche's project, which has

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[18]*Ibid.*, p. 73.

[19]*Ibid.*, pp. 70 - 80.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 65.

been roundly misunderstood, "did not formulate a philosophy of rebellion, but constructed a philosophy on rebellion."[21]

Once Nietzsche's diagnosis is accepted, and according to Camus it has been, a mad dash to escape this new and severe form of isolation ensues. Struggling to re-create a home, contemporary rebels pursue various solutions. While the desire to assuage this new form of exile is understandable, it has also been *the* motivation behind modern revolutions. Camus argues that the very atrocities of the murderous regimes of the century, ultimately, prove that the feeling of exile is the root cause. For even

> they prove . . . that they cannot dispense with mankind; they satisfy a terrible hunger for *fraternity*. "The human being needs happiness, and when he is unhappy, he needs another human being." Those who reject the agony of living and dying wish to dominate. "Solitude is power," says Sade. Power, today, because for thousands of solitary people it signifies the suffering of others, bears witness to the need for others. Terror *is the homage that the malignant recluse finally pays to the brotherhood of man.*[22]

In other words, while the desire to escape solitude lies behind every revolt, this new, more severe sense of isolation, is what lies behind revolution. If a revolt is generated solely out of isolation, if it is driven by denial of all but oneself, then terror is bound to follow. "Every ethic based on solitude implies the exercise of power. In this respect Sade is the archetype, for in so far as society treated him atrociously, he responded in an atrocious manner."[23] In other words, Sade's view of his isolation, his exile, shaped his judgment. The same is true of Meursault and Clamence. They all

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[21] *Ibid*, p. 68.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 248. (Emphasis added).

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

practiced *exiled judgment*. The pivotal role that exile plays in Camus's thought, including his theory of rebellion, becomes even more evident when his explicit distinction between rebellion and revolution is examined. He writes:

> "I rebel, therefore we exist," said the slave. Metaphysical rebellion then added: "we are alone," by which we still live today. But if we are alone beneath the empty heavens, if we must die forever, how can we really exist? Metaphysical rebellion, then, tried to construct existence with appearances. After which purely historical thought came to say that to be was to act. We did not exist, but we should exist by every possible means. Our revolution is an attempt to conquer a new existence, by action that recognizes no moral strictures. That is why it is condemned to live only for history and in a reign of terror. Man is nothing, according to the revolution, if he does not obtain from history, willingly or by force, unanimous approval. At this exact point the limit is exceeded, rebellion is first betrayed and then logically assassinated, it has never affirmed, in its purest form, anything but the existence of a limit and the *divided existence that we represent*: it is not, originally, the total negation of all existence. Quite the contrary, it says yes and no simultaneously. It is the rejection of one part of existence in the name of another part, which it exalts. The more profound the exaltation, the more implacable is the rejection. Then, when rebellion in rage or intoxication, adopts the attitude of "all or nothing" and the negation of all existence and all human nature, it is at this point that it denies itself. . . . Rebellion's demand is unity; historical revolution's demand is totality.[24]

This lengthy quote demonstrates that metaphysical rebellion not only influences the experience of exile, it also alters the human desire to know. Once metaphysical revolt becomes the starting assumption, the traditional epistemic demand, the demand for unity, gives way and is replaced by a demand for totality, for "All or Nothing." While human desire may change, the fact that reality, whether individual or universal, cannot be comprehensively deduced remains. If "All or Nothing" is the code, then every search, every effort to find "All," will eventually be an embrace of "Nothing."

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 250-51. (Emphasis added).

Camus's distinction between rebellion and revolution, the dangers of "All or Nothing" movements, are mainstays in the secondary literature on Camus. This examination, however, reveals that the critical difference between rebellion and revolution *is the manner in which exile is experienced and handled.* Metaphysical revolt is not liberating but oppressing. Faced with impossible goals--to discover "All" or push on in the face of "Nothing"--contemporary exile causes profound *existential* changes. A certain mania or pneumapathalogical desire seizes the contemporary psyche. This new experience, so severe that it dramatically alters epistemological and political expectations, leads to revolution.

Camus's analysis, which began with definitive statements about human nature and rebellion, has come full circle. Metaphysical revolt leads to a new form of exile which has existential effects. This existential experience, which has both the potential and probability of causing psychological disorder, fundamentally warps judgment. The loss of judgment, the inability to correctly distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate rebellions, ushers in modern revolution.

An interpretation of *The Rebel* that emphasizes human nature, is not new. It has received considerable attention in the secondary literature.[25] What has not been sufficiently emphasized is that while Camus was comfortable with the notion that certain aspects of human nature could be identified, such as revolt, he also maintained that all the attributes of human nature could never be comprehensively deduced. Such expectations are part and parcel of the "All or Nothing" movement. The notion that

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[25]See in particular, Fred Willhoite, Jr., *Beyond Nihilism: Albert Camus's Contribution to Political Thought*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).

humans can definitively know human nature is an anathema to Camus. Indeed, for Camus the very ambiguity and enigmatic character of human nature *is precisely one of the central characteristics of human existence.* As Camus's distinction between rebellion and revolution makes clear, an essential aspect of human beings is their "*divided existence.*" Camus makes this point more explicitly when he states that "[r]ebellion, in fact, says . . . that revolution must try to act, not in order to come into existence in some future date in the eyes of a world reduced to acquiescence, but in terms of *the obscure existence* that is already made manifest in the act of insurrection."[26] In other words, the manner in which rebellion deals with, and defines, human nature is illustrative. Rebellion accentuates the paradoxical aspect of human existence whereas revolution attempts to solve, once and for all, the question of what constitutes human beings. Revolution claims to know too much.

This is not to suggest that rebellion sheds no light on the human condition. To the contrary, by responding with defiance toward injustice while striving for justice, rebellion is representative of the paradoxical character of human existence. By saying both yes and no, rebellion discloses the enigma of existence while struggling to alleviate human suffering. By defying as opposed to denying, all rebellions recognize and affirm positive values. In the end, the pivotal distinction between revolution and rebellion involves their epistemic goals in general and approach to human nature in particular. Rebellions enhance and enumerate the paradoxical character of human existence, while revolutions falsely claim to settle the issue. This false certitude concerning human nature and the path required for its perfection is the central feature

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[26]*The Rebel*, p. 252.

of the murderous political regimes of the twentieth century. Exiled judgment leads to political atrocities.

To the degree that philosophic anthropology lies at the heart of Camus's political thought, Camus is reminiscent of Plato and Aristotle. Yet, Camus takes Nietzsche seriously. Taking stock of contemporary sensibilities and expectations, Camus feels that Nietzsche's diagnosis is essentially correct. In fact, what Camus said of Nietzsche is an apt description of his own position. He does not formulate a theory of rebellion but a philosophy constructed on rebellion. Like Nietzsche, Camus attempts to respond to the pervasive contemporary experience: exile.

What does it mean to say that the only true approach to the study of human nature is the recognition that it must remain enigmatic? How is meaning deduced from something that says both yes and no? This is the interpretive quandary that Camus's analysis leads to and it differs little from the problems faced by phenomenology and hermeneutics discussed in chapter two: human identity, both individual and collective, cannot be delineated in a precise fashion. Much like phenomenology and hermeneutics, Camus realized that much of the contemporary confusion resulted from a failure to address the question of human nature properly. Lurking behind modern modes of interpretation, whether philosophical inquiries into human nature, the meaning of text, or the symbolic representations of individual and collective identity, is the tendency to bifurcate reality into "All or Nothing." The inability to know the whole does not require an embrace of nihilism. That Camus was aware of this epistemological maxim is clear throughout his various remarks concerning reason. Indeed, Camus's analysis of reason demonstrates that a recognition of the limits of reason, of the fact that there are

many things beyond the capacity of human reason, does not lead to a negation or rejection of reason. To the contrary, a stoic adherence to limits *preserves* reason.

Yet an embrace of ambiguity, of the absurd, is not something that most humans can easily accept. Realizing that most people are driven by an insatiable desire for unity, Camus turned to art and symbols. Put more directly, Camus felt that art, symbols, and narrative were the best means of experiencing "unity"--affirming and denying simultaneously--without ending in revolution. "To escape this absurd destiny, [authentic rebellion must] rediscover the creative sources of rebellion."[31]

In order to accentuate the paradoxical character of existence yet still struggle for human dignity and justice, Camus turned to art in general and symbols in particular. As demonstrated in chapter three, Camus was well aware of the unique ability of symbols--highlighting the divided character of human existence by means of multiple interpretations--to address the paradoxical.[32]

This examination reveals several new aspects to Camus's theory of rebellion and limits. First, Camus's diagnosis of modern revolution is intimately connected to his analysis of twentieth century exile. Metaphysical revolt leads to a pernicious sense of exile and isolation which in turn leads to deformed human judgment. Once humans believe that they are alone in the universe, human judgment begins to assume the role of ultimate arbiter. Revolutions in the name of history or for the sake of achieving "new men" are byproducts, according to Camus, of faulty diagnoses of twentieth

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[31]*Ibid.*, p. 251.

[32]See chapter two and three for a more complete discussion of the uniqueness of symbols.

century exile. Second, a distinguishing factor between revolution and rebellion is the attitude each has toward paradox. Authentic rebellion, one that generates its own limits, recognizes and accentuates paradox whereas revolution contends to have solved the riddles of the human condition. This need to maintain paradox, to assert positive values without claiming to have solved all problems, is the reason why symbols are so important. Given their unique characteristics, art, symbols, and narratives are the most appropriate way to rebel without ending in murder. They are, at least in Camus's eyes, the path home.

The Sour Bread of Exile: *The Plague*

Whether interpreted as an allegory of the Nazi occupation or as his "revolt" novel, exile has not been overlooked as an important theme of *The Plague*. Nevertheless, most scholars focus on exile not as the major theme but as a means to explore other issues. For example, proponents of the allegory thesis praise the exploration of exile as a common sentiment, but criticize the use of such an abstract symbol as the cause. The death and dislocation incurred by a plague lacks the human dimension of the occupation; in other words, the allegorists argue that a plague will produce very different emotions and responses than those incurred by the Nazis.[33] In

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[33]For scholars that see the novel as a parable of World War II, see Shoshana Felman, "Camus's *The Plague*: Or a Moment to Witnessing," included in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, (London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 93-119; Steven Kellman, *The Plague: Fiction and Resistance*, (New York: Twayne Publishing, 1993); Roger Quillot, *Sea and Prisons: A Commentary on the Life and Thought of Albert Camus*, trans. Emmett Parker, (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1970); Philip Thody, *Albert Camus: 1913-1960*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961); and Raymond Stephanson, "The Plague Narratives of Defoe and Camus: Illness as Metaphor," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 48:3 (September, 1987), pp. 224-41.

contrast, those who characterize *The Plague* as a fictional rendering of Camus's philosophical themes praise his use of abstraction. John Cruickshank argues that "by means of a central and pervasive symbol, he is concerned to place the problem outside time. This is where he thinks the problem really belongs."[34] Cruickshank praises the use of a plague because while it transcends time, it nevertheless maintains a connection to the concrete. In short, the plague is a symbol that conforms to Camus's aesthetics--it lies midway between realism and formalism. A concrete symbol, one tied too literally to the Nazi occupation of France and Europe, would be inadequate to explore the "universal" character of the absurd and revolt. While these interpretations have considerable merit, they do not exhaust the possibilities. Indeed, what has thus far been neglected is that exile, judgment, and kingdom *are the dominant themes* of *The Plague.* Whether inflicted by military regimes, a plague, or simply the banality of existence, exile is the dominant condition of contemporary existence; and *The Plague* is primarily an exploration of various exiles, judgments, and proposed kingdoms that such conditions produce.

The structural evidence for this interpretation is compelling. In fact, upon close examination the division of the novel into five parts reveals that each section is an exploration of a specific type of exile. Part One presents an ancient form of exile. Reminiscent of Heraclitus and sleepwalking, Part One deals with exile brought on by the banality of existence. Caught up in the superficialities of life, most people are asleep to the important facets of existence. Part Two presents the exile ushered in by

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[34]John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 169.

the pestilence. Awakened from inattentiveness and cut off from the outside world, Oranians are forced to come to grips with physical and psychological dislocation. Part Three deals with the effects of sustained exile. Hope fades as everyday existence is consumed by the plague. Loss of freedom leads to a loss of individuality, and despair is no longer a condition but a way of life. Part Four is the turning point of the novel. The death of an innocent child forces a confrontation between Rieux and Paneloux; Rambert commits himself completely to the struggle against the disease; and Tarrou and Rieux attempt to form a new type of solidarity. Additionally, while these events should not be characterized as the cause, the plague begins to recede and hope for the end emerges. Part Five grapples with the consequences. What has been learned and what has been gained from these various experiences of exile? As the town prepares for the opening of its gates, will it return to the same superficial existence? Will the blatant exile brought by the plague be replaced by a more subtle and more common, but perhaps equally deleterious, form of exile? In short, is anything learned? More pointedly, Part Five is Camus's somewhat tentative response to exile; it is the precursor to Camus's vision of kingdom.

In addition to the structure of the work, Camus utilizes his characters to present different perspectives of exile. Whether Rieux's sense of duty, Grand's inability to express himself, Rambert's separation from his lover, Cottard's past crimes, or Tarrou's self-imposed exile, each character's isolation is brought on by different factors which in turn produce very different perspectives. In short, the novel is a multi-faceted presentation of exile and the search for kingdom.

From the start, the narrator makes clear that the transition in the novel is not from health to sickness but from unconsciousness to consciousness. For even prior to the arrival of the mysterious pestilence, Oran exists in a state of exile. Set in a town that has turned its back on beauty and inhabited by citizens mired in the habits and routines of daily life, Oranians sleepwalk through existence. Unwilling to face the complexities of human existence, people busy themselves with superficialities. Indeed, "[t]he truth is that everyone is bored, and devotes himself to cultivating habits"; they ignore what is essential and "fritter away . . . what time is left for living."[35] Germaine Bree goes even further and states that the plague is caused by--is the embodiment of--this lack of awareness. She contends that because the people of Oran "have little sense of reality, of either good or evil . . . this allows the plague to make rapid progress among them. . . . It does not develop as would any living organism, it spreads, monotonous, rigid, inhuman, occupying a city which, because of its lack awareness, is already conquered." Bree continues by remarking that "[t]he plague is not the symbol of an outer abstract evil; it merely applies and carries to their logical limits the values implicit in the unconscious attitudes of the citizens of Oran."[36] It is important to note that Oran is not particularly oppressive. In fact, its amorous and industrial citizens, spartan scenery, and austere architecture, make it oddly comforting. Such mediocre

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[35]Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. by Stuart Gilbert, (New York: Vintage International, 1991, p. 4.

[36]Germaine Bree, *Camus*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1959), p. 118.

pleasantries, however, are part of the problem. In time, "you go complacently to sleep there."[37]

Such a lack of awareness has severe ramifications. Most directly, it makes Oran especially vulnerable to the plague. Failing to recognize the early warning signs, the citizens and authorities do not respond appropriately until it is too late. More generally, this lack of awareness, this tendency toward sleep, represents the corrosive effects of everyday existence. In other words, inattentiveness produces *a particular form of exile.* This is nothing new. Throughout the ages, philosophers, prophets, and artists have often been called upon to serve as gadflies. People and civilizations, it seems, must often be jolted out of complacency. *The Plague* is Camus's symbolic attempt to accomplish this task.

Concretely, complacency leads to a failure of diagnosis. For example, while the worrisome toll of rats throughout the city initially gives rise to concern, most go to great lengths to convince themselves that nothing serious is wrong. "Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world . . . . [Y]et always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise."[38] Even when the bacilli spreads from rats to humans, few are willing to accept the severity of the situation. For the attentive, like Rieux and Castel, the signals are blatant. "Michel's death marked, one might say, the end of the first period, that of bewildering portents, and the beginnings of another."[39]

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[37]*Ibid.*, p. 6. Given Camus's familiarity with classical Greece, the Heraclitean inference should not be overlooked.

[38]*Ibid.*, p. 37.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 23.

Yet despite the rising concern among some, initially the transference of the disease from rats to humans ironically eases tensions. With the disappearance of the rats, the town settles back into a false level of comfort. Newspapers, for instance, lose interest; "[f]or rats died in the street; men in their homes. And newspapers are concerned only with the street."[40]

Stemming from a blatant disregard of history--believing oneself and one's community to be immune from the afflictions that have beset past civilizations--this particular form of exile has dire epistemological and practical consequences. Quibbling over terms and determined not to "alarm" the citizens, the authorities refuse to assess the situation accurately. The ability to diagnose the situation appropriately is vital. Incorrect conclusions lead to incorrect actions (or in this case to inaction) and wrong actions lead to deaths. While it is unlikely any actions could have prevented the plague completely, the damage certainly would have been lessened if the authorities had been willing or able to identify the crisis properly. Existing in a particular form of exile, focusing on superficialities and turning away from reality, opens the door to catastrophes--medical, social, cultural, as well as political. In the end, the plague cannot be ignored. Slowly, as more people become ill and death rates rise, the truth has to be faced. Part One concludes with an official telegram: "*Proclaim a state of plague stop close the town.*"[41]

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[40]*Ibid.*, p. 35. Obviously, this comment is a reference to journalism in general and, perhaps, his journalism in particular. By this time, the optimism that enjoyed by those involved in *Combat* and other Resistance style journalism had been lost.

[41]*Ibid.*, p. 63.

Part Two, then, is the realization that a new form of exile has emerged; "once the town gates were shut, every one of us realized that all, the narrator included, were, so to speak, in the same boat . . . . [A] feeling normally as individual as the ache of separation from those one loves suddenly became a feeling in which all shared alike and--together with fear--the greatest affliction of the long period of exile that lay ahead."[42] Realizing that they are cut off from the outside world, individuals struggle to relive recent moments; castigating themselves for nonchalant farewells to family and loved ones, they try and take stock of their lives and relationships. In short, Oranians awaken to the seriousness of everyday life, to the fragility of existence. What the plague brings most dramatically, most forcefully, is the awareness of exile. "Thus the first thing that plague brought to our town was exile. . . . It was undoubtedly the feeling of exile--that sensation of a void within which never left us," that was ushered in by the plague.[43]

It is at this point that the narrator notes that while exile is a common fact, the experiences of exile are diverse. Discussing three types of exile, he observes:

> Still . . . it was, for most of us, exile in one's own home. And though the narrator experienced only the common form of exile, he cannot forget those who, like Rambert, the journalist and a good many others, had to endure an aggravated deprivation . . . they were cut off both from the person with whom they wanted to be and from their homes as well. In the general exile they were the most exiled. . . there was for them also the space factor. . . . To come at last, and more specifically, to the case of parted lovers, who present the greatest interest and of whom the narrator is, perhaps, better qualified to speak--their minds were the prey

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[42]Albert Camus, *The Plague*, p. 67.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 71.

> of different emotions, notably remorse. . . . [I]n these conditions it was rare for them not to detect their own shortcomings.[44]

While different types of exile generate different emotions, several defensive reactions are common. For example, "once they felt the wounds that the imagination inflicts on those who yield themselves to it," and in order to protect against future flights of fancy, everyone tempers their thoughts. Resisting the urge to plan for the future or attempt to relive the past, folks settled "in a middle course between . . . heights and depths, they drifted through life rather than lived."[45] In other words, in order to endure people had to develop an indifferent attitude.[46] "Standing at the foot of the statue of the Republic that evening, he felt it; all he was conscious of was a bleak indifference steadily gaining on him . . . . And in this feeling that his heart had slowly closed in on itself, the doctor found a solace, his only solace, for the almost unendurable burden of his days."[47]

Another response, while by no means common to all, was the formation of communities specifically designed to resist the plague. The most famous of these groups was the "sanitary squads," townspeople actively engaging and struggling against the plague by cleansing the homes of those afflicted after evacuation. Putting

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[44]*Ibid.*, pp. 73 - 74.

[45]*Ibid.*, pp. 72 - 73.

[46]The allusions to *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and Meursault are obvious. Indifference is an important shield against the absurdity of existence. Once the future is cast into doubt and the past, burdened with the memory of one's deficiencies and mistakes, becomes increasingly difficult to bear. Indifference serves an important purpose; it is the attitude that paves the way for resistance in that it buttresses the human psyche for revolt.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. 91.

themselves at risk, coming into close contact with those already afflicted, was not remarkable, however.

> Those who enrolled in the "sanitary squads" . . . had no great merit in doing as they did, since they knew it was the only thing to do, and the unthinkable thing would then have been not to have brought themselves to do it. These groups enabled our townsfolk to come to grips with the disease and convinced them that, now that the plague was among us, it was up to them to do whatever could be done to fight it. Since plague became in this way some men's duty, it revealed itself as what it really was; that is, *the concern of all.*[48]

Experience confirms that terrible crises--wars, floods, famines, and even pestilences--can have positive effects. Startling people out of their complacency, their everyday exile, emergencies encourage the formation of new, often exceptionally intense and occasionally enduring, bonds. The plague fulfilled this function. Faced with calamity, people occasionally overcome their egocentric interests and act in selfless ways. These events are certainly praiseworthy; but, typically, the price is too high. Responding to Tarrou's observation that Rieux, like Paneloux, believes that there is a "good" side to the plague, Rieux states:

> So does every ill that flesh is heir to. What's true of all the evils in the world is true of the plague as well. It helps men to rise above themselves. All the same, when you see the misery it brings, you'd need to be a madman, or a coward, or stone blind, to give in tamely to the plague.[49]

The plague clearly induces a series of existential experiences. Producing an intense awareness of exile, individuals respond first with indifference, then with pathos, and finally with resistance. In the novel, this sort of solidarity is most obvious in the

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[48] *Ibid.*, p. 132. (Emphasis added).

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 125-26.

creation of the sanitary squads; but Camus reinforces this coming together in a variety of subtle ways. For example, following a discussion between Rieux and Tarrou, where they have dismissed the bureaucracies as incapable of dealing with the plague, they begin to walk out of the building together. Traversing a dark and narrow stairway and about to exit the building, "Rieux paused and behind him, Tarrou's foot slipped on a step. He steadied himself by gripping the doctor's shoulder."[50] This nearly imperceptible event is another signal that a community is being formed. The shift in consciousness, from individual to communal, has begun.

As if to protect against facile hope or naivete, Part Three ushers in the bitterness of sustained exile. As the weeks turn into months, a new experience of exile emerges and the transition away from subjectivity toward a collective conscious borders upon becoming complete. By mid-August, about six months since its appearance, "the plague swallowed up everything and everyone. No longer were there individual destinies; only a collective destiny, made of plague and the emotions shared by all. Strongest of these emotions was the sense of exile and deprivation, with all the crosscurrents of revolt and fear set up by these."[51] The plague disturbs everything. While prodding some to join together, the plague, ironically, takes its hardest toll on groups.

> It seemed that, for obvious reasons, the plague launched its most virulent attacks on those who lived, by choice or by necessity in groups: soldiers, prisoners, monks, and nuns. . . . Thus the disease, which apparently had forced on us the solidarity of a beleaguered town, disrupted at the same

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[50] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

> time long-established communities and sent men out to live, as individuals, in relative isolation.[52]

Additionally, the plague disrupts the social and cultural rituals of Oran. For example, the necessities of sanitation demanded that the traditions associated with burial had to be abandoned. "Formalities had been whittled down, and, generally speaking, all elaborate ceremonial suppressed. The plague victim died *away* from his family and the customary vigil beside the dead body was forbidden."[53] In other words, exile pervades all aspects of existence: life and death. Families once brought together by the passing of a loved one, given an opportunity to mourn, to remember, and to mark the passage of the past to the future by means of some time honored rite, now had to endure alone. "[A]ll was sacrificed for efficiency."[54]

Most serious, however, is the effect this new experience of exile had upon the psychological health of the community. As the necessity of battling the plague turned into monotony--"[t]he truth is that nothing is less sensational than pestilence"--a pervasive despondency engulfed the populace. In time, "imagination failed them. During the second phase of the plague their memory failed them, too."[55] The loss of imagination and memory erodes all, even the power or potency of love. "Thus, while during the first weeks they were apt to complain that only shadows remained to them of what their love had been and meant, they now came to learn that even shadows can

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[52]*Ibid.*, pp. 169-70.

[53]*Ibid.*, p. 173. (Emphasis added).

[54]*Ibid.*, p. 174.

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 180.

waste away, losing *The Plague* the faint hues of life that memory may give."[56] It was as if the inattentiveness that had afflicted Oran prior to the plague, returned. Only now, the original form of exile is exacerbated by this new, more disruptive, form. The result was "a vast despondency"; "the habit of despair is worse than despair itself."[57] In the end, "all of us ate the same sour bread of exile" and everyone resigned themselves to "marking time," "unconsciously waiting for the same reunion, the same miracle of peace regained."[58]

Part Four is the turning point. The first major change occurs with Rambert. The doubly exiled journalist, who had long been conniving to escape the city by means of an underground network and return to his beloved wife, suddenly undergoes a change of heart. In an effort to explain himself to Rieux, Rambert remarks that

> if he went away, he would feel ashamed of himself, and that would embarrass his relations with the woman he loved.
>
> Showing more animation, Rieux told him that was sheer nonsense; there was nothing shameful in preferring happiness.
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> "Certainly," Rambert replied. "But it may be shameful to be happy by oneself."[59]

Aware that no one could alleviate all unhappiness, Rambert explains that the real reason he has decided to stay lies in the fact that "[u]ntil now I always felt a stranger in this town, and that I'd no concern with you people. But now that I've seen what I have seen, I know that I belong here whether I want it or not. This business is everybody's

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[56]*Ibid.*, p. 181.

[57]*Ibid.*, p. 181.

[58]*Ibid.*, pp. 184-85.

[59]*The Plague*, p. 209.

business."[60] In other words, Rambert finally understood that community is far more elusive and unpredictable than he had previously believed. Accident and chance often play the defining role in shaping a community. But a lack of intention does not change the fact that human identity is both individual and communal. Circumstances may separate us from "home," but the search for community endures.

The most dramatic event in Part Four involves the death of a child. Unfortunately, dying children were nothing new. By this time, numerous children had perished. However, certain circumstances made this death special. Dr. Castel had been working on a vaccine since the outbreak and, despite several failures, now felt that he had discovered a viable vaccine. The day before Castel came to Rieux with the proposed antidote, M. Othon's son had fallen ill.[61] As the boy's condition worsened and it looked hopeless, Castel and Rieux decided to try the new serum. Of course, this meant that the boy had to be observed throughout the course of the illness. This made all the difference, for while

> [t]hey had already seen children die--for many months now death had shown no favoritism--but they had never yet watched a child's agony minute by minute, as they had now been doing since daybreak . . . . [H]itherto they had felt its abomination in, so to speak, an abstract way;

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[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

[61] *Ibid.* It is significant to note that this magistrate had been viewed disparagingly by Rieux and Tarrou. Indeed, in a previous conversation, where Othon had been praising the effect the plague had had on people obeying the laws and had remarked that "[i]t's not the law that counts, it's the sentence. And that is something we must all accept," Tarrou declared: "That fellow . . . is Enemy Number One." (p. 146) This man, whose bureaucratic sensibility had viewed the coming of the plague and its results so dispassionately, now struggled as his son became afflicted. Still trying to adhere to the rules, M. Othon pleads to Rieux "save my son." (p. 212)

> they had never had to witness over so long a period the death-throes of an innocent child.[62]

The cruel irony was that while the serum did not prevent the boy's death, it prolonged his suffering. The long battle, the seemingly relentless effort the boy put up in order to stave off death, was too much for Rieux to bear. Rushing out of the room following the boy's death, Paneloux, the priest, attempted to calm the doctor. After lamenting the boy's death and agreeing that the boy was truly innocent, Paneloux remarks that "[t]hat sort of thing is revolting because it passes our human understanding. But perhaps we should love what we cannot understand."[63] Mustering self control, Rieux disagrees: "No, Father. I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture."[64] Understandingly, Paneloux remarks that the key is grace: the ability to love what one cannot understand, to assent to a scheme of things that incurs so much suffering. Rieux admits that he does not share in grace but insists, "`[w]hat does it matter? What I hate is death and disease, as you well know. And whether you wish it or not, we're allies' . . . . `So you see'--but he refrained from meeting the priest's eyes--`God himself can't part us now.'"[65]

This confrontation between Rieux and Paneloux, often cited as an explicit rejection of Christianity by Camus, is significant for several reasons. In terms of exile,

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[62]*Ibid.*, p. 214.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 218.

[64]*Ibid.*, p. 214.

[65]*Ibid.*, p. 219.

it is clear that while not a believer, Rieux's does not desire to exclude Christians. Indeed, the passage indicates that he, and perhaps by implication Camus, feels a degree of solidarity with Christians. Nevertheless, this should not obscure the fact that Camus blames Christianity for laying the groundwork for the ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[66] Ultimately, Rieux contends that Paneloux's theology is another hybrid of the "All or Nothing" mentality.

In terms of exile and home perhaps the most important, occurrence in Part Four involves the solidarity formed by Tarrou and Rieux. Realizing that Rieux, whose exile stems from his incessant battle against the ravages of the plague, rarely relaxes, Tarrou makes a suggestion. Noting that while they had worked together for months, Rieux knew almost nothing about him, Tarrou proposes that they take an "hour off--for friendship."[67] Sitting on a terrace that looks out over the sea, Tarrou explains his exile to Rieux.

> To make things simpler, Rieux, let me begin by saying I had plague already, long before I came to this town and encountered it here. Which is tantamount to saying I'm like everybody else. Only there are some people who don't know it, or feel at ease in that condition; others know and want to get out of it. Personally, I've always wanted to get out of it.[68]

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[66]Camus's critique of Christianity, as essentially conjoining eschatology with *parousia* and thereby laying the foundations for modernity, is most systematically laid out in *The Rebel*, pp. 26-35. For an interesting secondary piece on Camus that deals with the connections between Christianity and Marxism, see Bruce K. Ward's, "Christianity and the Modern Eclipse of Nature: Two Perspectives," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, v. 65, Winter 95, pp. 823-843.

[67]*The Plague*, p. 245.

[68]*The Plague*, p. 245.

Continuing, Tarrou explains that he had always thought of himself as innocent until the day that his father--a mild man who "kept to the middle" and was very decent--cajoled him into coming to court to watch him prosecute a case. Although his father was the prosecuting attorney, Tarrou sympathized with the defendant. "The only picture I carried away with me of that day's proceedings was a picture of the criminal. I have little doubt that he was guilty--of what crime is no great matter. . . . I needn't go on, need I? You've understood--he was a living human being."[69] While this event disturbed him, Tarrou did not fully understand the significance of the proceedings, and his father's role, until the sentencing phase. When the niceties of the court proceedings gave way to the seriousness of judgment, the event took on a surreal character. Even Tarrou's father seemed transformed by the events.

> In his red gown he was another man, no longer genial or good-natured; his mouth spewed out long, turgid phrases like an endless stream of snakes. I realized he was clamoring for the prisoner's death, telling the jury that they owed it to society to find him guilty; he went so far as to demand that the man should have his head cut off.[70]

Afterwards, Tarrou rebelled against his father. Struggling to distance himself from his legacy, he joined an activist group. "To my mind the social order around me was based on the death sentence, and by fighting the established order I'd be fighting against murder."[71] In time, Tarrou realized that "we, too, on occasion, passed sentences of death. But I was told that these few deaths were inevitable for the building up of a

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[69]*Ibid.*, p. 247.

[70]*Ibid.*, p. 248.

[71]*Ibid.*, p. 250.

new world in which murder would cease to be."[72] This crass means to an end argument placated Tarrou for a while; but a few months later, after witnessing an execution, he realized his mistake. The execution produced "exactly the same dazed horror that I'd experienced as a youngster [that] made everything red before my eyes."[73] Only after this event awakened him to his complicity, did Tarrou come to realize that "I had had the plague through all those long years in which, paradoxically enough, I'd believed with all my heart and soul that I was fighting it."[74] Resisting his conclusions, Tarrou's compatriots confronted him with sophisticated, subtle, and often compelling arguments; but he remembered that the men in red robes also had a way with language and that their arguments, his father's arguments, had been persuasive as well. Seeing an execution, witnessing a bullet rip through a human chest, made a bigger impression on Tarrou than any argument.

> So that is why I resolved to have no truck with anything which, directly or indirectly, for good reasons or for bad, brings death to anyone or justifies others' putting him to death.
>
> That, too, is why the epidemic has taught me nothing new, except that I must fight at your side. I know positively . . . that each of us has the plague within him; no one, no one on earth is free from it. And I know, too, that we must keep endless watch on ourselves lest in a careless moment we breathe in somebody's face and fasten the infection on him. What's natural is the microbe. All the rest--health, integrity, purity (if you like)--is a product of the human will, of a vigilance that must never falter. The good man, the man who infects hardly anyone, is the man who has the fewest lapses of attention. And it needs tremendous will-power, a never ending tension of the mind, to avoid such lapses. . . . Pending that release (death), I know that I have no place in the world of

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[72]*Ibid.*, p. 250.

[73]*Ibid.*, p. 250.

[74]*Ibid.*, p. 251.

> today; once I'd definitely refused to kill, I doomed myself to an exile that can never end.[75]

Intrigued, Rieux pushes Tarrou further, and eventually Tarrou admits that he really desires to become a saint. Astonished, Rieux comments that Tarrou does not believe in God. "Exactly! Can one be a saint without God?--that's the problem, the only problem, I'm up against today."[76] Rieux is not persuaded. "`Perhaps,' the doctor answered. `But you know, I feel more fellowship with the defeated than with the saints. . . . What interests me is being a man.' `Yes, we're both after the same thing, but I'm less ambitious.'"[77]

It is after this exchange of perspectives, that Tarrou suggest they go for a swim. While the beaches had been closed since the outbreak, Rieux and Tarrou have official passes which allow them to get past the sentries. The scene that follows is the most uplifting one in the novel. Indulging in the natural beauty of the sea, recalling memories of childhood summers and timing their strokes to be in unison, the two swim silently together. Afterwards, climbing out of the sea, dressing and making their way back into the plague ridden city, "they were conscious of being perfectly at one, and the memory of this night would be cherished by them both." While Tarrou and Rieux differ in both their exile and vision of kingdom, the two create a binding solidarity.

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[75]*The Plague*, p. 253.

[76]*Ibid.*, p. 255.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 255.

Conclusion

The message of the first four parts of *The Plague* is precisely that differences do not prevent the formation of a community. Everyone does not have to agree. The magistrate, Meursault, and Clamence, are wrong. Disagreement does not preclude solidarity. This is not a facile argument about toleration, however. By juxtaposing characters embodying one or another version of the "All or Nothing" mentality, complete with their disastrous attempts to escape solitude, to characters who have more appropriate epistemological expectations, Camus diagnoses exile. Central to Camus's diagnosis is the ability to distinguish between diagnoses of exile, forms of judgment, and visions of kingdom. Not simply a presentation of diverse forms of exile, not just a diagnosis of the causes of exile, *The Plague* is a cautious step toward defining authentic rebellion and kingdom. In Part Four, Tarrou and Rieux take the first important steps toward achieving Camus's vision. Camus develops these themes further in Part Five of the novel. There, he presents his early conception of kingdom. Camus builds on this vision of kingdom in his final published work, *Exile and the Kingdom*. Just as in *The Plague*, the initial responses to exile in the work are illegitimate. It is not until the final story of the collection, *The Growing Stone*, that Camus presents his most complete vision of kingdom.

"After all," the doctor repeated . . . "since the order of the world is shaped by death, mightn't it better for God if we refused to believe in Him and struggle with all our might against death, without raising our eyes toward the heaven where He sits in silence?" . . . "Who taught you all this Doctor?" The reply came promptly: "Suffering."
Albert Camus, *The Plague*.

Chapter 6
Visions of Kingdom: Pathos as the Path

As his credentials as a "resistance intellectual" attest, Camus was deeply concerned with the problem of action. Convinced that it is constitutive of human nature to revolt against injustice, yet well aware of the disastrous consequences wrought by this sentiment, Camus struggled to locate a suitable goal. In short, what sort of social and political community should humans strive to attain? This is the question of kingdom and Camus addresses the issue most directly in Part Five of *The Plague* and, perhaps most successfully, in the final story of *Exile and the Kingdom*, "The Growing Stone."

As mentioned, exile in the Judeo-Christian tradition refers to a condition of displacement. Those in exile are discomforted, displaced; they often end up in strange settings far from home. Yet, as many of Camus's narratives exemplify, one can also be exiled in the most familiar of settings. Exile is more than physical, it is social, political, and, most important, existential. While occasionally referring to apocalyptic and millennialist dreams, kingdom is a radically altered change or transformation that reveals a new sense of hope and value. "Remember not the former things, nor consider

the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing" is the utterance of *Isaiah.*[1] Although this new thing, as in the case of Isaiah, is cast in terms of the old traditions, it is usually so innovative that it is unrecognizable to most. Thus, the poet says with some degree of impatience: "Do you not perceive it?"[2]

In political terms, exile is a condition where the values of the community, its *nomos*, as well as its sense of connectedness, are absent. Kingdom is that home in which those values are rediscovered and given new credibility and power. Camus knows the truth of Brueggemann's insistence that "the poetry of homecoming without the prior literature of *exile* is an offer of cheap grace."[3] Only after exile has been thoroughly examined does Camus move onto to kingdom. This is why *The Stranger*, *The Fall*, and the first five stories of *Exile and the Kingdom*, explore exile so thoroughly. Even in Camus's "positive" works, *The Plague* and *Exile and the Kingdom*, various symbolic forms of exile and kingdom are examined. In several instances, characters move from exile to kingdom only to find that the home at which they have arrived is flawed and the resulting exile even more intense. It is not until Part Five of *The Plague* and later in "The Growing Stone," that an authentic vision of community is offered. This tentativeness is characteristic of Camus. Realizing the deep roots and pervasive influences of exile, the chances for authentic social and

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[1]See *Isaiah* 43:18-19, Revised Standard Version.

[2]Isaiah 43:19. See also Walter Brueggemann's development of the notion of exile and the voice of hope in *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

[3]*Ibid* p. 90.

political communities are slim. Moreover, given his restrained epistemological assumptions, Camus's political theory offers no grand solutions. Nevertheless, an analysis of Camus's "positive" works reveals that Camus did believe that authentic politics is possible. Dealing with the symbols of exile, judgment, and kingdom throughout his corpus, Camus uses his poetic imagination to rekindle memory, to reinvigorate symbols. Ultimately, his lesson is an old one: exile, if properly judged, can evoke images of authentic kingdom.

Community of Resistance

Part Five of *The Plague* opens with cautious optimism. The plague, while not gone, begins to recede. Seemingly more vulnerable in retreat, the plague declines faster than any expect. The new serum, indeed all of the preventive methods that had once seemed so futile, now prove exceptionally effective. Yet even though human struggles against the plague are important, the perceptive understand that the "disease seemed to be leaving as unaccountably as it had come."[4] Regardless of the reason, many allow themselves hope; and as hope returns, people begin to concern themselves with "*the new order of life* that would set in after the plague."[5]

Predictably, the decline of the plague brings reactions as varied as the responses to its arrival. Those so unfortunate as to have family members struck by the plague in these last days, experience a new, and harsher, form of exile. "And this time of waiting in silence and exile, in limbo between joy and grief, seemed still crueler for the

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[4]*Ibid.*, p. 170.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 269. (Emphasis added).

gladness all around them."[6] For others, like the criminal Cottard, the possibility of the end of the plague provokes worry. Cottard had been one of the very few who truly welcomed the plague. Prior to the plague, his criminal record, and perhaps other unknown pressures, prompted him to attempt suicide. With the coming of the plague, he was no longer the only one who lived in constant fear. For Cottard, the plague ended his exile. With the plague waning, Cottard, like the others, turns his attention to the consequences of the pestilence. Speaking to his friend Tarrou, Cottard wonders whether everything will simply go back to the way it had been before? This *is* the question of Part Five.

This question becomes more personal for Rieux when the plague takes one last victim--Tarrou. His death was like "the last disastrous battle that ends a war and makes peace itself an ill beyond all remedy."[7] Succumbing to the disease with victory in sight, Rieux wonders what has been gained? What had Rieux learned?

> No more than the experience of having known the plague and remembering it, of having known friendship and remembering it, of knowing affection and being destined one day to remember it. So all a man could win in the conflict between the plague and life was knowledge and memories. But Tarrou, perhaps, would have called that winning the match.[8]

For Rieux, this is not enough. For while Tarrou lived a life without illusions, "[t]here can be no peace without hope, and Tarrou, denying as he did the right to condemn anyone whomsoever--though he knew well that no one can help condemning and it

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[6]*Ibid.*, p. 174.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 290.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 291.

befalls even the victim sometimes to turn executioner--Tarrou had lived a life of contradictions and had never known hope's solace."[9] Tarrou's solution is reminiscent of Camus's comments about confronting the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Tarrou's kingdom is too harsh; it calls for air "too rarefied" for human existence. Rieux understands this, and presumably it is hope that allows Rieux to deal with the loss of his most intimate relations--Tarrou and his wife. Exiled in a sanatarium since before the plague, his wife had long struggled with illness. Receiving the telegram announcing her death the day Tarrou perishes and sounding more like a man steeled by indifference than hope, Rieux's response is simply, "this suffering is nothing new."[10] How does Rieux face such suffering? Is he bolstered by a vision more grand, more hopeful, than Tarrou's?

Predictably, Camus's response is multifaceted and Part V of *The Plague* is a presentation of various visions of kingdom. As the plague ends and the gates of the town are opened, Rieux, for the first time, feels able to describe the townspeople accurately: "these men and women had come to wear the aspect of the part they had been playing for so long, the part of emigrants whose faces first, and now their clothes, told of long banishment from their distant homeland. . . . In different degrees, in every part of the town, men and women had been yearning for a reunion, not of the same kind for all, but for all alike ruled out."[11] Most yearn for a warm body, others, often without even being aware, for the company of friends. A few, like Tarrou, aim higher and seek

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[9]*Ibid.*, p. 292.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 293.

[11]*Ibid.*, pp. 298-299.

"reunion with something they couldn't have defined."[12] In short, everyone longed for a reunion, a return to their homeland.

As one of the chroniclers and committed to telling the truth, Rieux admits that he cannot definitively describe what the exile and reunion meant to everyone. Nevertheless, he felt that this deficiency is not significant. For himself, he felt content knowing that "he has deliberately taken the victims' side and tried to share with his fellow citizens *the only certitudes they had in common--love, exile, and suffering.*"[13]

For Rieux, the plague ends and he resumes his old routine. The struggle goes on. Visiting his old asthma patient, a man he had been caring for prior to the plague, he is greeted by the old man's narrow and jaded wisdom. Inquiring if he can go up on the terrace, the terrace he and Tarrou had shared while taking an "hour off for friendship," the old man agrees but adds: "You'd like to have a look at 'em--that it? But they're just the same as ever, really." Even before he reaches the roof, however, Rieux realizes that this night is different. No longer in revolt but exultant in deliverance, "[i]n this new-born freedom their desires knew no limits." Although realizing that in the larger sense, perhaps, the old man was correct--they had not changed--he also knew that this was both "their strength and their innocence, and it was on this level, *beyond all grief*, that Rieux could feel himself at one with them." For Rieux, the educative message was clear; "to state quite simply what we learn in time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise."[14]

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[12]*The Plague*, p. 299.

[13]*Ibid.*, pp. 301-2

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 308. (Emphasis added).

This anthropological observation, this optimism, is significant. Indeed, despite Camus's persistently dark humor, it is this realization that gives him cause to hope. It is this belief that staves off suicide. In short, hope is the centerpiece of his political theory. No solution, no vision of kingdom, void of hope can be sustained. This was Tarrou's mistake.

It is important to note, however, that even this insight is tempered. Personal and historical experience taught Camus that he could not tell stories, nor subscribe to political theories, that declare final victory. He could only be a part of never a ending struggle against "terror and its relentless onslaughts." For in the end,

> the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; it can lie dormant for years in furniture and linen-chests; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city.[15]

Keeping in mind that Camus never intended the plague to be seen as abstract or external but part and parcel of the human condition, exuding from us as much as infecting us, this final cautionary note is an observation about human nature. Camus is emphasizing that while "there are more things to admire in men than despise," human beings are still capable of atrocities. Camus's presentations of various exiles and kingdoms, then, are an effort to explore how men and women driven by good intentions often end up committing or supporting injustice.

Exile and the Kingdom

It has been demonstrated that Camus returned to and reworked *The Stranger* in *The Fall*. What is more difficult to establish, however, is that *Exile and the Kingdom* is

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[15]*The Plague*, p. 308.

a reworking of *The Plague*. Interpreting *The Plague* as a collection of disparate visions of exiles and kingdoms makes the connection more obvious. Even though *Exile and the Kingdom* has proven to be one of the most difficult texts of Camus's to decipher, one fact is beyond dispute: it is a presentation of diverse visions of exiles and kingdoms.

The form of *Exile and the Kingdom* poses certain interpretative difficulties. Indeed, because the "message" of the collection as a whole or individual stories as separate entities is somewhat obscure, most scholars have paid considerably less attention to *Exile and the Kingdom* than Camus's other works. Some argue that the medium itself--short stories--is inherently inferior to novels. Others simply contend that Camus's talents had declined to such a degree that the works did not justify serious attention. Despite such early confusion and shortsightedness, several notable scholars are now reappraising the work. An important development, one instrumental to the renewed interest, is the fact that it is now clear that the order of the stories within *Exile and the Kingdom* was intentional and designed to fulfill some larger purpose.[16] Although it is not correct to say that there is a linear progression, from "The Adulterous Woman" to "The Growing Stone," several scholars now agree that there is indeed some form of progression. The first five stories are now seen as explorations of various illegitimate visions of exile and kingdom. Camus, it seems, felt the need to more fully

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[16]See in particular Peter Cryle, "Diversity and Symbol in *Exile and the Kingdom*," included in *Essays on Camus's Exile and the Kingdom*, Judith D. Suther, ed., (Oxford: University of Mississippi Press, 1980), pp. 247-258 and English Showalter, *Exiles and Strangers: A Reading of Camus's Exile and the Kingdom*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984).

examine exile before offering any vision of an authentic kingdom. In short, now the sixth story, "The Growing Stone," is seen as the capstone to the collection.

In this collection of short stories, Camus explores alternative symbols of exile and kingdom, indicating in the former sense the various conditions that lead human beings to lives of exile and in the latter sense exploring various visions of kingdom. Progressing from "The Adulterous Woman" to "The Growing Stone," Camus rejects various unauthentic symbols of kingdom until, ultimately, he embraces what he regards as an authentic vision of kingdom.

In "The Adulterous Woman" we encounter Janine, the wife of Marcel, a middle-aged, cloth merchant consumed by his business interests. Married for twenty-five years to Marcel, Janine had expected the desert, much as life, to be "palm trees and soft sand."[17] Yet, things had not turned out as expected, and now she had dreams of "the erect and flexible palm trees and of the girl she had once been."[18] "She saw that the desert was not that at all, but merely stone, stone everywhere, in the sky full of nothing but stone-dust, rasping and cold, as on the ground, where nothing grew among these stones except dry grasses."[19] Camus's use of stones to depict the cool and hard sterility of the desert and of life is reminiscent of Clamence's Amsterdam. The scenery reflects the exile. As she travels with Marcel to an oasis town, Janine is seized by a loneliness she has tried to deny. "She was waiting, but she didn't know for what. She

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[17]Albert Camus, *The Adulterous Woman*, in *The Fall & Exile and the Kingdom*, translated by Justin O'Brien, (New York: The Modern Library, 1958), p. 158.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 162.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 158.

was aware only of her solitude, and of the penetrating cold, and of a greater weight in the region of her heart."[20] On the advice of the manager of their hotel, Janine and Marcel climb the terrace around the town fort to view the desert. In the distance, Janine sees and is fascinated by the black tents and outlined figures of the homeless nomads. She sees them as "possessing nothing but serving no one . . . free lords of a strange kingdom" and she feels her boredom dissipate into a "sweet, vast melancholy." "It seemed to her that the world's course had just stopped and that, from that moment on, no one would ever age any more or die." [21] That evening, lying quietly in the dark, Janine is overpowered by an anguished realization that she was going to die without having been liberated. Her feelings beckon her back to the fort and the vista. There, under the stars, she succumbs erotically to the heavens, and "with unbearable gentleness, the water of night began to fill Janine, drowned the cold, rose gradually from the hidden core of her being and overflowed in wave after wave, rising up even to her mouth full of moans."[22]

When she quietly returns, as she must, to her husband's bed, Janine watches as her husband rises for a drink of mineral water. He notices her weeping uncontrollably and looks upon her "without understanding." Her reply to his gaze: "It's nothing, dear . . . it's nothing."[23] Many critics have interpreted this ending as a realistic resignation to her plight and it is, in part; however, it surely must be, as well, an awareness of the

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

fleeting character of the kingdom of liberation she has experienced and of the inevitable return, in her resignation, to exile.

Janine's exile is a life of unfulfilled promise and of the absence of passion. She longs, ever so powerfully for a return to that promise, to youth, and to passion. And for one brief, erotic moment, beneath a desert sky, she finds that passion. But, Janine returns, where is she to go after all, to her bed of duty and security and unfulfilled promise. The kingdom of eros will not suffice; a return to the youth of palm trees and soft sand is not possible. The cold stones of life are too overpowering.

"The Renegade" is a grim story, written in the first person, as a monologue. It begins in confusion. "What a Jumble! I must tidy my mind" are the narrator's first words.[24] The renegade's exile is one of resentment and hatred. The Christian religion, for him, was an escape from poverty and family. Under the tutelage of a Catholic priest he chose the vocation of a missionary. He was taught of the goodness of missionary work and he accepted the vocation of going to the savages and telling them: "Here is my Lord, just look at him, he never strikes or kills . . . he turns the other cheek . . . choose him."[25] Pig-headed by nature, the renegade attempts to show his resolve and travels to the barbarous, bitter and evil desert city of salt, Taghâsa, a renowned fortress of cruelty. His new masters teach him a lesson in pain, torture, isolation, and submission. It is a lesson of cruelty without pity, of violence and domination. Eventually, they cut out his tongue. He is a missionary with his tongue removed and he has a score to settle with the priest who taught and deceived him. Such is his

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[24]Albert Camus, *The Renegade, The Fall & Exile and the Kingdom*, p. 182.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 184.

degradation and resentment that he waits for his replacement with rifle in hand: "the day they cut out my tongue, I learned to adore the immortal soul of hatred."[26] Home for the renegade is now the realm of malice. He longs for a pure truth, devoid of defects, and denounces the Lord of kindness for an absolutism of evil. His is a kingdom of madness: "may hate rule pitilessly over a world of the damned, may the wicked forever be masters, may thy kingdom come, where in a single city of salt and iron black tyrants will enslave and possess without pity."[27] Such is the absolutism of the renegade, and it is reminiscent of Meursault, Caligula, and Clamence. It is yet another faulty and ultimately exclusive notion of kingdom.

After the renegade kills the replacement missionary, he is set upon again by his savage tormentors. Experiencing a concluding moment of repentance, which becomes a commentary on his own tormented vision of kingdom, in his final suffering he wonders: "Who is speaking, no one, the sky is not opening up, no, no, God doesn't speak in the desert, yet whence comes that voice saying: `If you consent to die for hate and power, who will forgive us?'"[28] He has been wrong a second time. The renegade turns to his tormentors and bids them to cast off their hate-ridden faces and to "be good now, we were mistaken, we'll begin all over again, we'll rebuild the city of mercy, I want to go back home."[29] To go back home, to rebuild the city of mercy is clearly the vision of kingdom that Camus embraces, but it is too late for the renegade. His bidding

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[26]*Ibid.*, p. 199.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 206.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 208.

[29]*Ibid.*, p. 209.

for such a kingdom ends in a mouthful of salt. Despite his new convictions, despite his renewed sense of hope, this renegade priest who literally has no tongue is incapable of communicating properly. Desire and hope are not enough for an authentic kingdom; communication and understanding must also exist. Ultimately, the message of "The Renegade," while deeply disturbing and darkly presented, varies little from *The Stranger* or *The Fall.* Absolutism does not allow for communication or kingdom.

In "The Silent Men" Camus returns to one of his favorite subjects, the worker. Yvars, the lead character, is a cooper who, with a few of his fellow workers, has engaged in a fruitless strike against his employer. The employer is not altogether unsympathetic with the plight of the coopers, but he can do little about it. The strike has failed and Yvars and his friends have been forced to return to work in humiliation. Their exile is the fatigue of defeat, of having a trade and no work, of having to work without sufficient pay, of being obsolete. Yvars and his friends return to their work as silent men. They do not know how to speak or what to say. Yet, their work, in silence, has a warmth to it and life gradually reawakens in the shop. Their boss, Lassalle, tries to engage the men in conversation. They cannot respond, and he, of course, is offended. Lassalle pleads with them to put away their humiliation and even promises one day when business picks up to see that they are appropriately rewarded. "Let's try to work together," is his plea. Yet, Yvars, who can break bread with and share his food with another worker, cannot speak to his boss. Esposito, one of Yvars friends, tries to say what everyone is thinking, "that they were not sulking, that their mouths had been

closed, they had to take it or leave it, and that anger and helplessness sometimes hurt so much that you can't even cry out."[30] But how does one express the inexpressible?

So overpowering is their silence that the workers cannot respond in simple humanity when the boss's daughter falls seriously ill. When Lassalle says good night to them in a dispirited tone, they cannot even express sorrow for his suffering. At times, exile is so overwhelming, so complete, that it prevents pathos. The troubles that exist between Lassalle and the workers are too great. No communication, conventional or otherwise, is possible.

Camus's silent workers are not just in exile because of their humiliation; they are oppressed by work itself and the inequalities it brings. Thus, Camus refuses the easy romanticism of those who would extol the virtues of manual labor. Yvars, reflecting on manual labor, says: "Wherever the muscles are involved, work eventually becomes hateful, it precedes death, and on evenings following great physical effort sleep itself is like death. . . . Those who indulge in clichés about manual work don't know what they're talking about."[31]

The kingdom of silence is clearly insufficient for Yvars and his fellows, just as it was for Meursault. It robs them of their humanity towards the suffering of others. In the end, at home, in the quietude of an evening with his family, Yvars can only long to be young again and to wish for another chance. "Across the sea."[32] There and then, maybe, communication was possible.

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[30]Albert Camus, "The Silent Men" in *The Fall & Exile and the Kingdom*, p. 226.

[31]*Ibid.*, p. 227.

[32]*Ibid.*, p. 232.

As the title implies, "The Guest" is a tale about hospitality, albeit political hospitality. A school master in a mountain village, isolated by geography and a winter storm, Daru feels at home in this harsh region. "Everywhere else, he felt exiled."[33] He teaches the children of poor families and he lives simply, but life is good for him. Daru's mistake is to believe that a life of solitude, respect for others, and an acceptance of place had "created a harmony between him and his universe."[34] Alas, this was a delusion. Daru is alone, physically and morally. Indeed, as Showalter suggests, for Camus, "silence is . . . one of humanity's first encounters with the absurd. The universe that we expect will tell us of the glories of God or at least of the wonders of nature is in fact a silent desert."[35] Into this solace, arrives Balducci, an old and local gendarme who has a prisoner, an Arab, whom he is delivering to Daru, who is in turn charged with delivering the Arab to his punishers in another village. Refusing this assignment, Daru and Balducci argue. Balducci leaves, insulted, but without his prisoner.

Struggling with distrust, Daru eventually yields to his humane conscience. He feeds the Arab and treats him with kindness. Indeed, he takes him to a crossroad and gives him dates, bread, sugar, and money. He points out two roads, two choices. One road leads to the nomads where he will, according to their customs of hospitality, be sheltered and taken in. The other road leads to prison. Clearly identifying with the nomads, as he is returning to the school Daru notices that the Arab is "walking slowly

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[33]Albert Camus, "The Guest" in *The Fall & Exile and the Kingdom*, p. 236.

[34]English Showalter, Jr., *Exiles and Strangers: A Reading of Camus's Exile and the Kingdom*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984, p. 85.

[35]*Ibid.* p. 69.

on the road to prison." Disillusioned, Daru returns only to find words clumsily written on the blackboard: "You handed over our brother. You will pay for this." In the midst of this misunderstanding, having offended his friends and his enemies (it is difficult to discern between the two), "in this vast landscape he had loved so much, he was alone."[36]

"The Guest" is a tale of inversion. At the outset Daru has found his kingdom, a simple life of teaching the children of the poor. Yet, politics, the politics of the reduction of human beings to racial and ethnic stereotypes, subjects of one state or another, conspires to rent that kingdom asunder, and thereby illustrates the fragility of the good. Daru's yearning to live in something other than a pointless and meaningless manner is perhaps the ground of the revolt against the absurd. Clearly autobiographical and just as clearly one of the most pessimistic of the stories in the collection, "The Guest" is the story of a man who tries to be human, to be compassionate, to be understanding, who knows of freedom and has no wish to take sides. In the political universe, all too often such a man is in exile. Actions will more often than not be misunderstood. Misunderstandings are another form of inadequate communication and, as demonstrated in "The Guest," often have dire consequences. They can ruin any kingdom.

"The Artist at Work" may be even more autobiographical than "The Guest." It has been suggested that the artist Jonas is a gentle caricature as well as a self-portrait of

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[36]"The Guest," p. 257.

Camus's own difficulties in putting pen to page.[37] More to the point, the title suggests what we know well of Camus's attitude toward creativity. The artist has work to do!

Gilbert Jonas, whose namesake is Jonah, has incredibly good luck. He is a man of gentle character and some talent, whose success undermines his life. His generosity and success are more the result of passivity and laziness than any hard work on his part. Nonetheless, Jonas gradually develops a following, then disciples, well wishers and hangers on. His home is literally overrun with guests. He became, as Camus pointedly says, regarded so highly that henceforth "no weakness was permitted."[38] As more and more interest is shown in Jonas' work and as more and more "friends" accumulate, his production begins to decline. As his reputation declines, Jonas works less, "without really knowing why. . . . He would think of painting, of his vocation, instead of painting."[39] What follows is a foray into alcoholism and promiscuity until his loyal wife, Louise, confronts him. Ashamed and asking forgiveness, Jonas returns to Louise and to his house, where he builds a loft and climbs into it, not to paint, but to meditate. At first he occupies his loft only during work hours; then gradually he begins to eat in the loft and then to sleep in it. Finally, all his waking and sleeping hours are spent in his loft. As he withdraws into the loft, he falls ill and collapses. His friend, Rateau, finds a canvas in the loft on which Jonas had not painted anything. Instead, he had written a word in the center of the canvas, too small to be read. Thus, one could not tell

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[37]Showalter, *Exiles and Strangers*, p. 31.

[38]Albert Camus, "The Artist at Work," in *The Fall & Exile and the Kingdom*, p. 275.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 292.

whether he meant "solitary" or "solidary." In fact, both are descriptive of his condition. His solidarity with others has been a delusion; he has become the worst of solitary exiles who has betrayed his work and his family.

Jonas's kingdom was his success, an illusory success that turned on him. His inability to cope with that success, to remain faithful to his vocation and to his true friend and family, renders him impotent. He loses what little talent he had, failing to nourish his lucky star sufficiently. His exile is the disillusionment over and the uncertainty expressed in his confused final rendering on canvas.

The New Sisyphus: D'Arrast and "The Growing Stone"

From the outset, Camus makes it clear that "The Growing Stone" is a tale about exiles in search of a kingdom. D'Arrast, a French engineer who is to build a jetty in the small village of Igape to prevent flooding, is clearly unfamiliar with Brazil. Traveling through The Serra--striking in its desolation and misery--on winding, muddy roads, crossing a river by means of a ferry in the dead of night, and then traversing the lush forest in the dark, the scenery and setting clearly confuse D'Arrast. Passing a settlement on the way, he inquires: "Where were we? In Tokyo?"[40] It quickly becomes clear, however, that D'Arrast's exile is complicated; he is not simply a modern engineer stuck in some strange land. Confessing to the cook he befriends, D'Arrast states that "I used to be proud; now I'm alone."[41] Some mysterious event, one that perhaps cost someone their life, led to D'Arrast's exile. In short, he is a psychological as well as a physical exile.

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[40]*Ibid.*, p. 167.

[41]*Ibid.*, p. 187.

The cook likewise is not a native of Igape. Once a cook on a vessel that sunk because of a fire on board, the cook relays a miraculous story. After his lifeboat capsized and he was dazed by a blow to the head, he drifted. Alone in the dark waters and unable to swim proficiently, the cook became frightened. In the distance, shimmering in the sparse light from the town, the cook glimpsed the Church of good Jesus in Igape. Promising to carry a hundred-pound stone on his head during Jesus's procession if he was saved, the cook's life was spared. "You don't have to believe me, but the waters became calm and my heart too. I swam slowly, I was happy, and I reached the shore."[42]

Even the good statue of Jesus is not native to Igape. It also washed in from the sea. Discovered by some fishermen upstream, when it was taken to Igape and washed, suddenly a stone "grew in the grotto."[43] This stone turned out to be miraculous. Every year during the procession of good Jesus, people come and break off a piece of the stone with a hammer; but by the following year the stone has replenished itself. This juxtaposition of a replenishing stone and the rites associated with Christianity are symbolic of the intermixture of religions in Brazil. Christianity, like D'Arrast, the cook, and the good statue, were at one time foreign to the village.

An educated Frenchman come to "command the waters and dominate the rivers," is quite a spectacle for the "leaders" of the community.[44] But D'Arrast is not

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[42]*Ibid.*, p. 183.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 179.

[44]*Ibid.*, p. 170. Brazil is often referred to as a "racial democracy" because the racial and class distinctions are not as intimately connected there as in other nations. Clearly intrigued by this aspect of Brazilian culture, Camus presents the leaders as

welcomed by all. Indeed, at first the impoverished citizens rebuff him. It is not until he befriends a ship's cook--the one who has made a vow to carry a stone through the village to the church--that he begins to be accepted by the lower echelons of the village. Much to his chagrin after he has thought it over, D'Arrast promises to attend a pagan ritual in order to keep the cook from over indulgence.[45]

As the dancing and drumming begin, D'Arrast watches with a detached curiosity. As the intensity of the ritual increases and as the heat rises, D'Arrast begins to lose control of his senses. Glancing beside him, he notices that the cook has begun to dance. "Then he noticed that he himself, though without moving his feet, had for some little time been dancing with his whole weight."[46] This contradiction, dancing without moving, is an effort to reveal the persuasive power of the ritual. D'Arrast, clearly an outsider and unfamiliar with the situation, is nevertheless drawn in and nearly absorbed. As the ritual becomes more violent, as the leader seizes a saber from a clay statue of a local god placed in the corner, D'Arrast notices that the cook has joined in the dancing. It had occurred without his knowledge and before he can do anything the cook is

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coming from various racial backgrounds. Combined with the fact that D'Arrast is the grandson of a noble family back in France, Camus's presentation of the leaders of the community is at times disparaging and ironic.

[45]The ritual, which is called a *macoumba*, is derived from African heritage and is designed to induce a merger between an individual and a god by means of dance and incantations. For a more complete discussion see Jamie Castro Segovia's "Reflections of the Afro-Brazilian World in "The Growing Stone", included in *Essays on Camus's Exile and the Kingdom*, ed. Judith D. Suther, (Oxford: University of Mississippi Press, 1980, pp. 171-188.

[46]*Ibid.*, p. 193.

swirling around the hut smoking a cigar. In time, the dancers fall into a trance, and as the dancing becomes more rigid, the spectacle takes on a surreal quality.

> Their heads would wag backward and forward, literally separated from a decapitated body. At the same time all began to howl incessantly with a long collective and toneless howl, apparently not pausing to breathe or to introduce modulations--*as if the bodies were tightly knotted, muscles and nerves, in a single exhausting outburst, at last giving voice in each of them to a creature that had until then been absolutely silent.*[47]

The importance of this ritual is apparent: the villagers discover unity and community through their participation. By means of ceremony, they form bonds that supersede individuality. Symbolic of this is that during the proceedings, as the dancing women become exhausted and fall to the ground, the leader kneels and seizes them by their temples. Embracing them with his hands, they are slowly rejuvenated. Staggering to their feet, the women resume their howling, weakly at first, then increasing their pitch until ultimately they faint, and the process begins anew. In short, the villagers have their own ritual of renewal. The *macoumba* demonstrates that not only are they part of a greater whole, it also reveals the power of the community to renew life and buttress struggle.

As the ritual becomes too much for D'Arrast and he kneels against the wall of the hut to fight back his nausea, a new phase of the ritual begins: the sensual dance of the daughter of his host. Enraptured by her movements, the cook suddenly interrupts. Speaking to him in a cold voice, "as if speaking to a stranger," the cook tells the captain that he must leave; "they don't want you to stay now."[48] Feebly, D'Arrast urges the

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[47] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

cook to leave with him--it is not long before the cook will have to carry the stone; but the cook will not leave. Unable to shake off the affects of the ritual and staggering as if drunk on the way back to his bed, D'Arrast is again absorbed by his exile. Unable to participate fully, D'Arrast is alone once again.

A night of too much wine and dancing leaves the cook exhausted and when he attempts to fulfill his promise, despite enormous effort, he collapses in humiliation and defeat. Not knowing what to say but feeling that he must live up to his commitment, D'Arrast intuitively assumes the burden of the stone and begins to follow the path to the church. Alas, for him the church is not a sanctuary. As he has said to the cook in a previous conversation: "I never found my place [there]. So I left."[49] In solitude, D'Arrast turns instead toward the cook's hut, amid the other dwellings of the poor, and upon arriving "hurled the stone onto the still glowing fire in the center of the room."[50] Then, D'Arrast experiences a transformation unlike any of the other protagonists in the short stories of *Exile and the Kingdom*; "drinking in with desperate gulps the familiar smell of poverty and ashes, he felt rising within him a surge of obscure and panting joy that he was powerless to name." The inhabitants of the hut arrive and take a place in a small circle around the stone and the hearth. For his part, D'Arrast, standing with eyes closed, "joyfully acclaimed his own strength; he acclaimed, once again, a fresh

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[49]Albert Camus, "The Growing Stone," in *Exile and the Kingdom*, p. 348.

[50]*Ibid.*, pp. 359-60.

beginning in life."[51] The brother to the cook makes a space in the circle of family and friends and invites D'Arrast: "Sit down with us."[52] D'Arrast has overcome his exile.

Suffering, Communication, and Community

The key to understanding Camus's political theory, as developed in Part V of *The Plague* and "The Growing Stone," hinges on his position on suffering. The struggles that lead to the creation of legitimate political communities, those of Rieux and D'Arrast, share a similar approach to the alleviation of human suffering. Yet Camus's position is not only presented in his fiction. His critique of Christianity and historical revolution also reveal the importance of pathos in Camus's political thought.

Beginning in his dissertation, *Metaphysique chretienne et Neoplatonisme*, and continuing throughout his fiction and nonfiction, Camus utilized and examined Christian themes, images, and symbols. The standard interpretation of Camus's perspective, as presented in his most systematic treatment, *The Rebel*, is that even though he had a profound respect for much of Christianity, especially the Christian idea of charity, he felt that it played a crucial role in the development of modern revolutionary tendencies. Camus writes in *The Rebel* that:

> In contrast to the ancient world, the unity of the Christian and Marxist world is astonishing. The two doctrines have in common a vision of the world which completely separates them from the Greek attitude. . . . The Christians were the first to consider human life from and the course of events as a history that is unfolding from a fixed beginning toward a definite end, in the course of which man achieves his salvation or earns

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[51] *Ibid.*, p. 360.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 361.

> his punishment. The philosophy of history springs from a Christian representation.[53]

More specifically, philosophy of history essentially grew out of the Christian belief in *parousia*--God returning and ending the suffering and injustice of the world and creating a state of perfection once again--because when it failed to occur, Christians theorists, most notably St. Augustine, extended the time frame indefinitely. In time, this open-endedness, this uncertainty, gave rise to a multitude of movements that planned, plotted, and pined for the *parousia*. Eventually, faith in the end of history became pervasive throughout Europe, and was adopted, albeit in a highly transformed manner, by German Idealism.

The contention that modernity is simply the secularization of Christianity is not unique to Camus, nor does it adequately explain his position. A more complete explanation, especially when fiction is given sufficient weight, *is that suffering and how it is confronted* is central to Camus's critique of Christianity as well as for his treatment of the symbols exile, judgment, and kingdom.[54]

For Camus, the New Testament seeks to answer the two problems that trouble all rebels--death and evil--"by painting the figure of God in softer colors and by creating an intercessor between God and man."[55] Although such a theodicy is compelling, it has the unintended effect of "justify[ing] and even sanctify[ing] human

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[53]*The Rebel*, p. 189.

[54]The importance of suffering to Camus's thought has been touched upon by numerous scholars. For the most recent, and in many ways the best, treatment see Bruce K. Ward, "Christianity and the Modern Eclipse of Nature: Two Perspectives," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, v. 65, Winter 95, pp. 823-843.

[55]*The Rebel*, p. 32.

suffering by having God himself experience it."[56] Instead of actively resisting and struggling against suffering and injustice, Christianity tends to shift focus to otherworldly concerns. In short, Christianity misdirects the rebellious spirit. Instead of battling present injustices and struggling to alleviate suffering, Christianity tends to focus the innate rebellious desire on some perfect world to be achieved in the indefinite future. In effect, Christianity suggests that suffering endured today prepares and qualifies one for the *parousia*. For Camus, this is tantamount to sanctioning evil. Whether based on the Bible or on thinkers such as Hegel and Marx, philosophies of history make "it possible to explain suffering in terms of a divine [or higher] plan which finally brings true good out of apparent evil."[57]

In *The Plague*, the Christian tendency of sanctioning suffering is embodied by Father Paneloux. Following the boy's death and his confrontation with Rieux, however, "something *seemed* to change in him (Paneloux)."[58] Deciding to give a second sermon and urging Rieux to attend, Paneloux attempted to explain the plague once again. But it quickly becomes apparent that despite his recent experience the second sermon differs more in style than in substance. Indeed, Paneloux begins with a reaffirmation of the harsh message of his first sermon. He again stresses that the just have no need to fear but those who mocked God, those who "believed some formalities, some bendings of the knee, would recompense Him well enough for your criminal indifference,"[59] should

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[56]Bruce K. Ward, p. 829.

[57]Bruce K. Ward, p. 829.

[58]*The Plague*, p. 220. (Emphasis added).

[59]*Ibid.*, p. 97.

know that the plague was sent by God as punishment. He goes on and states that "all trials, however cruel, worked together for good to the Christian."[60] The only substantive difference in the second sermon is that the confidence that evil can readily be deduced has disappeared. For Paneloux, "[t]here was no doubt as to the existence of good and evil and, as a rule, it was easy to see the difference between them. The difficulty began when we looked into the nature of evil, and among things evil he included human suffering."[61] While the suffering of some humans--criminals and the like--makes perfect sense, "we see no reason for a child's suffering."[62] Despite being disturbed by the child's death, Paneloux concludes with a traditional Christian response. For Camus, this standard response--that a suffering child will be rewarded with eternal life and peace--simply does not suffice. No one can claim to know, for certain, that eternal peace awaits. In the end, Paneloux's message has not changed and he still sanctions suffering. Rieux remarks:

> No, he, Father Paneloux, would keep faith with that great symbol of all suffering, the tortured body on the cross; he would stand fast, his back to the wall, and face honestly the child's agony. And he would boldly say to those who listened to his words today: "My brothers, a time of testing has come for us all. We must believe everything or deny everything. And who among you, I ask, would dare to deny everything?"[63]

It is important to note that Camus is not insensitive to the beneficial teachings of Christianity. For example, in terms of joining the struggle against the pestilence, both

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[60]*Ibid.*, p. 223.

[61]*Ibid.*, p. 223.

[62]*Ibid.*, p.223.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 224.

Paneloux's sermons and his actions urge Christians to act. Additionally, Christians must face the evils of the world without the knowledge that God will spare them. Paneloux preaches that Christians must be willing to engage in the struggle against suffering (just as he works with the sanitation squads) and accept the consequences. Nevertheless, while Christians were to struggle against suffering in general and the plague in particular, for Paneloux, only the love of God can "reconcile us to suffering and to the death of children, it alone can justify them, since we cannot understand them, and we can only make God's will ours."[64] In the end, faced with immense suffering, with the death of innocents, a Christian must either lose faith or consent to undergo similar suffering. Commenting on his second sermon to Rieux, Tarrou observed: "When an innocent youth can have his eyes destroyed, a Christian should either lose his faith or consent to having his eyes destroyed. Paneloux declines to lose his faith, and he will go through with it to the end."[65] This is why when Paneloux is afflicted by the plague he refuses Rieux's assistance. Consenting completely to God's plan, Paneloux heeds his own advice. A priest has no need of a doctor and Paneloux is one of the last victims of the plague.

Although Camus's rejection of Paneloux's solution is not surprising, he rejects Tarrou's solution as well. Believing Tarrou's desire to become a saint is too taxing, Rieux respected but ultimately rejected Tarrou's vision of kingdom. As Tarrou's life slipped from him, Rieux wondered if he had found peace. Knowing that Tarrou lived a life without hope, forever focused on trying not to inflict any suffering, Rieux feared

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[64] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

that Tarrou died alone. He had, of course, known some forms of friendship, of companionship and community, but Rieux knows that Tarrou's ultimately goal--to become a saint while lacking faith in God--was unattainable. Even in the alleviation of suffering, Camus seems to suggest, limits must be found.

Rieux's perspective on revolt and suffering is presented much earlier in the novel. In Part Two, Tarrou attempts to get acquainted with Rieux by asking him a series of questions. Discussing some of the similarities between Rieux and Paneloux, like their belief that some "good" comes out of the plague, Tarrou notes that Rieux's realization--that he does not have certainty, that he is stumbling around in the dark--is precisely "the gulf between Paneloux and you?"[66] While this is clearly a difference, Rieux objects. The *central difference does not concern knowledge but suffering*. He states that

> if he believed in an all-powerful God he would cease curing the sick and leave that to Him. But no one in the world believed in a God of that sort; no, not even Paneloux, who believed he believed in such a God. And this was proved by the fact that no one ever threw himself on Providence completely. Anyhow, in this respect Rieux believed himself to be on the right road--in fighting against creation as he found it.[67]

Rieux reasons that since the order of the world "is shaped by death," it is more prudent to rebel against death, to fight suffering and injustice in this world than spend time

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[66]*The Plague*, p. 126.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. 127.

pining for otherworldly solutions.[68] When Tarrou asks where Rieux learned such a hard lesson, Rieux replies flatly: "Suffering."[69]

Although in the end it is incorrect to say that *The Plague* identifies with any of these solutions completely, Camus seems to promote Rieux's solution as most authentic. Rieux is able to form communities with very disparate individuals. Rambert, Grand, Tarrou, and even Paneloux are drawn in and accepted. Additionally, the text reveals certain deficiencies with the other two perspectives most seriously considered: Tarrou's and Paneloux's. Rieux's response differs from Paneloux's and Tarrou's in several important respects. Not only is Rieux's more inclusive, Rieux also avoids falling into "All or Nothing" tendencies. While all three revolt against injustice and suffering, Rieux's revolt is moderated. By acknowledging the importance of hope, by admitting that humans cannot face an absurd world without assistance, Rieux says both yes and no. Even though one "message" of *The Plague* is to beware of solutions, Camus puts forth Rieux's solution as at least a viable starting point.

An additional message in *The Plague* is that suffering fulfills several significant functions. Suffering has the potential to promote community as well as facilitate communication. One example of pathos fulfilling both functions, involves Grand. Struggling to write the perfect novel, searching for the precise language necessary to convey an image he has had in his mind for decades, Grand becomes fixated on the first sentence. Unable to find just the right words, Grand writes and rewrites. This inability to proceed, which is representative of Grand's inability to communicate as a whole, has

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[68] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

drastically impacted Grand's life. It led to his menial career--he had been promised a promotion but had never been able to "find the right words" to request it--and destroyed his marriage. Pressed by poverty and scarred by the loss of hope, Grand gradually became silent; with little to say, he drove his wife away. "A time came when I should have found the words to keep her with me--only I couldn't."[70] In short, Grand's trouble with words led to his exile. With the coming of the plague, Grand is gradually drawn to those actively resisting the pestilence. For Grand, such action is not remarkable; after all "one's got to help a neighbor."[71] As he gets to know both Rieux and Tarrou, he begins to ask their advice. While his new friends are not able to solve all his problems, he no longer struggles alone.

A minor bureaucrat by trade, Grand volunteers to keep the records for the sanitary squads. Frail by nature, he quickly becomes exhausted by his new duties; "nonetheless, he went on adding up the figures and compiling the statistics . . . . Patiently, every evening, he brought his totals up to date, illustrated them with graphs, and racked his brains to present his data in the most exact, clearest form."[72] Grand's obsession--to express himself in the clearest and most precise language--is not a unique desire. At the very outset of the novel, the narrator exhibits a similar desire when he endeavors to remain "objective." Tarrou also struggled to use language in the clearest and most precise manner. Discussing his complicity in murder, Tarrou stated: "I'd come to realize that all our troubles spring from our failure to use plain, clear-cut

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[70]*Ibid.*, p. 83.

[71]*The Plague*, p. 20.

[72]*The Plague*, p. 137.

language. So I resolved to speak--and to act--quite clearly, as this was the only way of setting myself on the right track."[73] While this frustration with language, driven by a desire to express the deepest and most profound experiences of the human condition, is well intentioned, it is, in fact, a byproduct of the "All or Nothing" movement. In more philosophic terms, this desire to find a stable language, one that is truly transparent, is simply a misunderstanding of the nature of language--it is misplaced concreteness. By representing this preoccupation in three different characters, Camus is calling attention to the limits of language. Camus's interest in the power of words is well known, but in this work he seems to be suggesting that *pathos is necessary for certain forms of authentic communication.* For example, bristling at the overflowing sympathy Oran received from various news outlets at the outbreak of the plague, Rieux observed that "he knew the sympathy was genuine enough. But it could be expressed only in the conventional language with which men try to express what unites them with mankind in general; a vocabulary quite unsuited, for example, to Grand's small daily effort, and incapable of describing what Grand stood for under plague conditions."[74] In other words, there are certain experiences that are difficult, if not impossible, to express by means of conventional language. This barrier to language is most obvious during times of crisis. Rieux noticed, that "well-meaning speakers tried to voice their fellow-felling, and indeed did so, but at the same time proved the utter incapacity of every man truly to share in suffering that he cannot see."[75] Hearing sympathetic but essentially blind

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[73]*Ibid.*, p. 254.

[74]*Ibid.*, p. 138.

[75]*The Plague*, p. 138.

voices had the effect of "bringing home still more the unbridgeable gulf that lay between Grand and the speaker."[76]

Camus extends his notion of the communicative power of pathos in the culminating story of *Exile and the Kingdom*, "The Growing Stone." A civil engineer sent to bring the salvific powers of technology to the jungle, D'Arrast embodies the struggle to reduce suffering. Moreover, his ultimate act of reducing suffering, bearing the stone burden for his befriended cook, demonstrates the communicative powers of pathos.

Obviously an allusion to the procession of Christ struggling to bear the cross, the pivotal scene of the story begins with the cook staggering down the path. Informed by the cook's brother that he had already fallen once, D'Arrast watches intently as he struggles to fulfill his promise. Suddenly, "without knowing how," D'Arrast finds himself by the cook's side, bracing him."[77] At first, progress is made. After a few steps, however, the cook slips and the stone slashes his shoulder as it falls. As several people prepare to lift the stone back onto the cook's shoulders, D'Arrast tends to the cook. "Holding him in a tight clasp with his full height leaning over him, D'Arrast spoke into his face as if to breathe his own strength into him."[78] Momentarily inspired, the cook approaches the stone. Staring vacantly and realizing that he cannot, the cook's arms fall to his side as he accepts defeat. Exhausted, he cries out: "I promised. . . . Oh

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[76] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

[77] "The Growing Stone," p. 207.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Captain! Oh Captain!"[79] Unable to express himself in words, D'Arrast seizes the cork mat and approaches the stone. Bearing the stone easily on his shoulder, "he started off on his own."[80] Resisting the cries of the crowd to fulfill the cook's promise and bear the stone to the Church, D'Arrast takes the stone to the cook's hut and places it in the hearth. When the cook and his family arrives, no doubt shocked, "[t]hey stood in the doorway without advancing and looked at D'Arrast in silence as if questioning him. But he didn't speak."[81] As first the cook, then various townspeople, begin to sit around the stone. No one looks at D'Arrast. Then, half turning toward D'Arrast but not catching his eyes, the brother points to an empty spot and says, "Sit down with us."[82]

D'Arrast's nameless joy, a kingdom without a name, is a community built upon pathos. From building the damn to shouldering the boulder for the cook, all of D'Arrast's activites are designed to alleviate suffering. Intuitively embracing the pain of the community, D'Arrast proclaims a fresh beginning. Such is the new kingdom for Camus: nameless, intuitive, and borne in pathos.

It is significant that the earlier stories in the collection of *Exile and the Kingdom* are bounded in solitude. Typically, the protagonists are ordinary people, with good intentions and reasonable expectations. Yet, for one reason or another, life does not turn out as expected. These exiles, are separated from self, from others, and from the material world. Their isolation is both spiritual and physical; and Camus symbolically

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[79] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

represents their isolation in a variety of ways. For example, in the previous five stories in *Exile and the Kingdom* the environment is sterile. The brief moments of illumination, of transcendence, they experience are cast in terms of deserts, stars, and stones. In contrast, "The Growing Stone" takes place in a jungle. The bleak landscapes have been left behind and the bounty and vigor of the jungle is symbolic of a new beginning. Indeed, as the title of the story suggests: "in this climate the very stones may come alive and start to grow."[83]

Additionally, the story is a return and reworking of past symbols. D'Arrast is Camus's final version of Sisyphus. Even though both Sisyphus and D'Arrast were motivated by a desire to lessen the suffering of others, Sisyphus bore the stone as a punishment. D'Arrast shoulders the stone in an effort to share or alleviate the cook's suffering. By helping the cook keep his promise yet continuing to rebel against forces he deems as sources of injustice--in this case, Christianity--D'Arrast escapes, if only for a moment, his exile.

For Sisyphus, the rock always rolls back down the hill. His punishment is never ending. In "The Growing Stone," the stones and rituals are not a source of punishment or frustration but of alleviation. The stone in the grotto miraculously replaces chips taken by the villagers as a sign of renewal and regeneration. Likewise, the *macoumba* reveals to the participants that there is something in which they all share in that is greater than each individual. Only by participating in the strange and surreal ritual does this greater entity obtain a voice. D'Arrast's willingness to share the burden of the stone for the cook completes, albeit in a modified fashion, the larger Christian rejuvenation

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[83]Showalter, *Exiles and Strangers*, p. 115.

ritual. In short, "The Growing Stone" presents several perspectives, offers several paths, for rejuvenating community. By participating in the rituals, by literally sharing the suffering of the cook, D'Arrast not only becomes accepted into the group, he assists in the formation of a new kingdom. Infused with the power of pathos, his exile ends because he participates.

It is important to note, however, that "The Growing Stone" is a story of reconciliation that is unfinished; and even if it were, it would not last. There are no easy or permanent solutions. Camus's resolutions are always indeterminate. That is, after all, the nature of his theory of symbols, kingdoms with limits. Yet, when there is a moment of reconciliation, a moment of shared joy, such as occurs in "The Growing Stone," we are given a momentary glimpse of Camus's values--"a perfect lucidity about one's relations with the universe; honesty in one's relations with other people; and solidarity with other human beings, based on respect for their freedom and awareness of a common fate."[84] Such moments and symbols of transfiguration are to be embraced.

Culminating the capstone story of *Exile and the Kingdom* with a scene of intense, yet wordless, communication is meant to exemplify the communicative power of pathos. The intense suffering humans endure cannot be housed in words. For Camus, without pathos there can be no authentic communication. The problem with Christianity, at least as Camus depicts it, is that too often it has turned attention away from concrete human suffering. For Camus, suffering is not something to be endured but *resisted.* This is Camus's credo and it is what distinguishes his vision of kingdom

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[84]*Ibid.*, p. 143.

from characters like Paneloux, Tarrou, and the first protagonists of *Exile and the Kingdom*. Rieux and D'Arrast struggle against human suffering, and, most importantly, their goal is not to distinguish themselves from others. They do not pine to be unique: a saint without God, a judge-pentitent who evades all judgment, or a lonely anti-hero indifferent to the world. Camus's positive characters embrace the world. They struggle to ease human suffering when they confront it, and they take actions intended to bring the community together. For Camus, the path to community lies in the power of pathos.

Conclusion

It is important not to confuse sympathy with pathos. Although well intentioned, sympathy is superficial. Too distant from the actual events, sympathy lacks understanding. In other words, the difference between sympathy and pathos is epistemological. Only by *experiencing* another's pain does suffering begin to provide the basis for community. The crucial distinction between sympathy and pathos, then, is the *affect* the experience induces. According to scholars like Voegelin, a kind of existential experience or deeper level of understanding must take place if the suffering of others is to be incorporated into one's consciousness. "Pathos is what men have in common, however variable it may be in its aspects and intensities. Pathos designates a passive experience, not an action; it is what happens to man, what he suffers, what befalls him fatefully and what touches him in his existential core."[85] In short, pathos is a mode of communication; and humans can only come to know another's pain by

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[85]Eric Voegelin, vol. III, *Order and History: Plato and Aristotle*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957, p. 29.

participating in the experience itself. Since it is often impossible to undergo the original experience, individuals participate in another's experience by means of some form of mediation. As demonstrated in chapters two and three, symbols have a unique ability to represent deep and profound experiences. Indeed, several contemporary theorists insist that the very definition of a symbol rests in its connection to an engendering experience. This is why Eric Voegelin hyphenates the two terms--experience-symbolization.

Suffering, then, plays an important role for Camus in several respects. First, it is a crucial part of Camus's critique of Christianity and the ideological movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Second, suffering has the potential to generate authentic social and political communities. Grand moves beyond his linguistic isolation; Rambert realizes that he is part of the community; and Paneloux, Rieux, and Tarrou join forces and struggle side by side against the plague. D'Arrast, the cook and his family, and friends, begin to participate in the rites of the community. Whether the *macoumba* or fulfilling the cook's promise, these characters *communicate* with each other at a level beyond linguistic expression. Despite very different perspectives about both exile and kingdom, all these individuals move beyond their differences and toward a community. Finally, comprehending suffering has epistemological ramifications. Deep and profound sentiments cannot be adequately communicated by conventional language. Part of this problem stems from the larger issues, such as the effects of inflated views of the power reason which lead to problems such as misplaced concreteness; but even without such tendencies Camus seems to suggest that language, even carefully crafted language, simply cannot convey certain experiences. In other

words, the suffering of others cannot be experienced nor properly expressed with conventional language. This is why symbols, art, and narratives are so important. By utilizing certain powerful symbols within carefully crafted narratives, it is possible to penetrate and, in some limited sense, illuminate experiences that are otherwise obscure. This is what Camus attempted to do in *The Plague* and "The Growing Stone."

From where did Albert Camus get the strength that sustained him for decades in the tension of his meditation and enabled him to look through the perversion of rebellion and to overcome it? For Camus it came from the myth. . . . The "madness" of the time is no home for man; he must choose the home in which he, living, will again create a home in time. Camus chooses the myth.

Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

The Turn to Myths and Symbols

Throughout his life, Camus was committed to political action. Most notably, he was one of a gallant group of Frenchmen who actively resisted the Nazis and their Vichy pawns. Relying on words and ideas more than bullets and bombs, Camus nevertheless undertook enormous personal risk. Hiding combatants, assuming aliases, and serving as a courier for important documents, Camus was an active member of the French Resistance. He also joined the battle against totalitarianism. Unlike many Europeans, Camus's resistance did not begin with the invasion of Poland. He was one of the first and most resolute voices in decrying the rise of fascism, whether in Germany, Italy, or in the homeland of his grandmother, Spain. When so many were content to remain quiet, to acquiesce, or even to collaborate, Camus spoke out. He resisted.

This willingness to oppose popular opinion was characteristic of Camus. The most startling, and personally trying, example was his position on Algeria. A Frenchman born in Algeria, Camus wrote newspaper articles and essays about the plight of the Arabs and the injustice of the French colonial system long before it was

fashionable.[1] When the debate finally surfaced as an important issue in Europe, Camus was unwilling to go along with the emerging consensus. His refusal to side completely with the Arabs, prompted many to accuse him of French chauvinism. Despite the inaccuracy of such attacks, and they must have been painful given his early support of Algerian Arabs, he continued to try and steer a middle course. In the face of vitriolic attacks from virtually all sides, Arabs, colonists, communists, and nationalists, he persistently sought compromise.

His break with the traditional French left was almost as painful. A leftist himself who never relinquished the struggle for labor rights and social equality, Camus marched, protested, and advocated radical politics until his death. Nevertheless, he would not be silent about the oppression and injustice in the Soviet Union. After voicing his philosophical and moral concerns in *The Rebel*, Camus became the target of choice for the political and artistic left.

All of Camus's stances, some popular, others ridiculed, were taken publicly and often in opposition to some of the most notable figures in France and Europe. Thoroughly persuaded by the notion of the "resistance intellectual," Camus believed that artists and intellectuals must accept certain responsibilities, certain duties, and he actively participated in politics throughout his life.[2] Even in those periods when he was afflicted by writer's block and could not work on his art, Camus was politically engaged.

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[1]See Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1979), pp. 193 - 199.

[2]See Albert Camus, "The Artist and His Time," *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Knopf, 1960), pp. 181-209.

As the ideological climate surrounding the Cold War has subsided, Camus's positions, on topics ranging from the injustices of the Soviet Union to the conundrum that is Algeria's politics, have largely been vindicated. Initially exalted as the "noble witness of a rather ignoble age,"[3] then denounced as politically paralyzed and philosophically naive, the current assessment of Camus, especially in France, is quite favorable. Now even the struggles in the latter part of his career, the periods of silence and sterility, the subtle yet bitter jabs at both himself and his enemies so prevalent in his last two works of fiction, *The Fall* and *Exile and the Kingdom*, and his restrained political stances, are seen as exemplary. Camus's commitment and eloquence in the face of such opposition is beginning to establish him as one of the most renowned figures in the long and illustrious tradition of French moralism.

Camus's activism and moralism, however, are not easy to explain. He was an avowed atheist, a man who argued that the universe is impenetrable to human reason and therefore inevitably absurd. Those who focus solely on Camus's early works characterize him as a philosopher of the absurd, an existentialist. But, Camus explicity denied that he was an existentialist, the absurd was only a beginning point. Yet, other interpretations, pointing especially to late works, such as *The Rebel*, argue that Camus was an essentialist. Noting that he stridently rejects the progressive and historical philosophies of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, several scholars situate Camus in the classical tradition of political theory. However, there are too many remarks by Camus,

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[3]Tony Judt quoting Pierre de Boisdeffre, "Camus *et son desin*," in *Camus*, (Hatchette, 1962), from "The Lost World of Albert Camus," *The New York Review of Books*, October 6, 1994, p. 4.

late in his career and well after his revolt works, that negate such interpretations. For Camus, the absurd is just as "essential" to human existence as rebellion. To deny the absurd would diminish human existence. It would be an act of religious or philosophical suicide. Thirty-eight years after his death, the question remains. What infused Camus with the strength to act, to continue to struggle, in the face of the absurd?

As the epigraph to this conclusion attests, Eric Voegelin believed that Camus derived sustenance from his engagement with myths. Given Camus's preoccupation with myths and symbols throughout his corpus, one would not expect such a statement to be novel. Yet, no scholarly work has systematically examined Camus's understanding and use of symbols, myths, and narrative. This is surprising. For when Camus's writings are carefully scrutinized, it becomes clear that he had a sophisticated understanding of the character and importance of myths, symbols, and narrative; and when his theory of symbolization is used to analyze his fictional works, it becomes clear that Voegelin was correct. Myths and symbols were the source of Camus's strength and values.

Camus was not alone in his interest in symbols and narrative. Rejecting modernity's faith in the powers of human rationality, many twentieth century thinkers turned to nonrational modes of thinking and communication. Quite naturally, philosophers and artists began to explore the efficacy of myths and symbols. Chapter two of this work reveals that several thinkers, including Ernst Cassirer, Eric Voegelin, and Paul Ricoeur, identify significant shared attributes of myths, symbols, and narratives. While there is no evidence that Camus was aware of the emerging

consensus on the importance of symbols and narrative, his ideas on symbols and stories are remarkably congruent with that trend. Yet, Camus goes further. He not only theorized about the power and import of myths, symbols, and narrative, Camus returned to and rejuvenated myths and symbols in his fictional works.

Recognition of the significance of myths and symbols in Camus's works has led to a reassessment of his thought. Instead of analyzing his writings with a concentration on his philosophical themes only, in this dissertation attention has been given to Camus's interest in and reconstruction of myths and symbols. In this manner, a close reading of Camus's *ouerve* reveals that exile, judgment, and kingdom are overarching themes of his work. An examination of his earliest writings, from his dissertation to *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*, as well as reevaluating *The Myth of Sisyphus, The Stranger, The Plague*, and *The Rebel*, reveals the predominance of exile and kingdom as fundamental themes. This realization is significant for several reasons. First, it resolves the issue of whether Camus repudiated his early works when he utilized Judeo-Christian themes in his late works. Clearly, he did not. Camus had been exploring exile, judgment, and kingdom from the very beginning. Second, the reintegration of these symbols into Camus's thought elucidates his political theory. For example, Camus's diagnosis of the twentieth century is greatly enhanced by his notion of exile. Indeed, the key to authentic diagnosis and to authentic rebellion is precisely a recognition of the unique character of twentieth century exile.

Camus's lasting legacy, then, will be his reliance on myth, symbol, and narrative. Attempting to ease the contemporary experience of exile with stories of communities built upon the recognition of human suffering and the struggles against it,

Camus's storytelling has important ethical, philosophical, and political ramifications. If Camus's decision to write stories in the midst of totalitarianism seems facile, one should remember that art matters. Camus realized this and would have agreed with Ricoeur's assertion that

> [t]here can be no praxis which is not already symbolically structured in some way. Human action is always figured in signs, interpreted in cultural traditions and norms. Our narrative fictions are then added to this primary interpretation of figuration of human action; so that narrative is a redefining of what is already defined, a reinterpretation of what is already interpreted. The referent of narration, namely human action, is never raw or immediate reality but an action which has been symbolized and resymbolized over and over again. . . . If this were not so, if literary narrative, for example, were closed off from human action, it would be entirely harmless and inoffensive. But literature never ceases to challenge our way of reading human history and praxis.[4]

Realizing that art has social, cultural, and political effects, Camus used it to battle the forces of totalitarianism of whatever variety, political or philosophical.

The conventional scholarship on Camus has focused on five aspects of his political thought: his notion of the absurd and critique of reason; his theory of rebellion and denunciation of revolution; the source of limits or moderation in his thought; his philosophic anthropology; and the importance of authentic communication. This dissertation amplifies the conventional understanding of Camus's political theory in a number of ways by focusing on his understanding and use of symbols. First, from his views on reason and the absurd to the importance of authentic communication, Camus's understanding and use of symbols dissipates many of the *aporias* in his thought. In short, recognizing the role of symbols in Camus's works subsumes the conventional

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[4]Paul Ricoeur, "The Creativity of Language," ed. Mario J. Valdes, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 469-70.

understanding of his political thought. Second, and most important in terms of contemporary political theory, once a proper understanding of Camus's conscious use of symbols is exposed, a sophisticated theory of language, mediation, and representation emerges. This places Camus at the forefront of a movement to reexamine the potential and limits of language. No longer simply a critic of ideological tendencies, Camus's theory of symbolization makes him highly relevant in even the most vanguard arenas of political theory, such as poststructuralism or postmodernism. Finally, unwilling to return to metaphysical justifications for politics and action, but determined to struggle against injustice, Camus's moralism emanates from his meditation on myths and symbols. Determined to find a third way, Camus sought a politics of justice without appealing to transcendent values. He proposed to do so by appealing to and utilizing the communicative power of pathos.

The Absurd as Exile

It has long been known that Camus's initial works on absurdity were a critique of reason and contemporary rationalism. *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and *Caligula* exposed the limits of human rationality by exploring the confrontation with the absurd. Even though Camus's articulation of the absurd has been investigated at length, previous scholarship has neglected the degree to which Camus identified the absurd with exile. Seeing Camus as an artist engaged in philosophical themes, scholars focused on the theme of the absurd to the neglect of exile. Yet, as chapter four demonstrates, exile is the social and political condition of contemporary existence. It is, in many ways, the practical result of the absurd. Unable to understand ourselves, let alone the world around us, contemporary experience is one of intense alienation. The

social and political consequences of this new form of exile have been catastrophic. According to Camus, the atrocities of the twentieth century, from Stalinism to Nazism, are directly attributable to this unique experience of exile and alienation.

The connection between the absurd and exile has profound ramifications with respect to Camus's epistemology. Camus understands the absurd to be a sensibility, one as dependent upon human expectation as it is on the impenetrable character of reality. Given that the psychological status of human beings fulfills such an important role in Camus's understanding of epistemology, the unique experience of exile and isolation cannot be overlooked. Put another way, the absurd and exile are, at least in some sense, interdependent. The unique sense of isolation so predominant in contemporary existence fundamentally undermines human psychological health. This, in turn, warps human expectation which further intensifies the experience of the absurd. Ultimately, Camus's epistemology cannot be comprehended without a recognition of both the absurd and exile.

Camus's most systematic analysis of the problems plaguing the twentieth century occurs in *The Rebel*. Although not generally acknowledged, the key to this work is its inquiry into the effect exile has on human judgment and rebellion. According to Camus, as the urge to revolt changed from defiance to denial--and rebellion turned into revolution--the character of exile changed as well. As the previous foundations of society and politics were deemed illegitimate, the responsibilities and burdens on humans grew. In time, with the death of God and with an inflated faith in the power of human reason, human potential was seen as unlimited: "the death of God

was followed by the deification of man."[5] Alone in the cosmos, if the human condition was to be improved, if suffering and injustice were to be lessened, it was up to human action and reason. Camus states that

> [i]n this world rid of God and of moral idols, man is now alone and without a master. . . . From the moment man believes neither in God nor in immortal life, he becomes "responsible for everything alive, for everything that, born of suffering, is condemned to suffer from life." It is he, and he alone who must discover law and order. The time of exile begins, the endless search for justification, the aimless nostalgia, "the most painful, the most heartbreaking question, that of the heart which asks itself: where can I feel at home?"[6]

What actually lies behind Camus's diagnosis of the revolutionary tendencies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, then, is this experience of *a new form of exile*. Alone in the universe yet determined to struggle against injustice, the rebellious spirit is co-opted by millennialist movements. No matter how grand the plan or sophisticated the justification, all modern revolutions are induced by the desire to escape exile and find a home. The conventional understanding of Camus's differentiation between rebellion and revolution, as hinging on an acceptance of inherent limitations, is incomplete, without understanding this desire. For Camus, the only way of avoiding modern revolutions is to confront and, in some sense, assuage, this experience of exile.

Although many thinkers might simply call for a return to more traditional and supposedly more stable foundations for politics, Camus did not believe that metaphysical or divine justifications were viable. This is supported by both the

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[5]John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 102.

[6]Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower, (New York: Vintage International, 1984), p. 70. Short quotations from Camus's reading of Nietzsche.

frequent declarations of his atheism as well as his treatment of various visions of exiles and kingdoms in his fictional works. Rejecting priests in *The Stranger*, *The Plague*, and *Exile and the Kingdom*, it is clear that Camus did not embrace Christianity. His critique of historical rebellion is also illustrative. Longing for unity but realizing that it is unattainable, Camus, in short, refused to ignore the facts of contemporary existence. He accepted, or at least dealt with, the prevailing experiences of exile--spiritual as well as political. In the end, Camus's comment about Nietzsche, that he "did not formulate a philosophy of rebellion, but constructed a philosophy on rebellion," turns out to be self-descriptive.[7]

Yet Camus's recognition of the dominant mood should not be taken as acquiescence. Camus was quite aware of the deficiencies of much of contemporary theory and, in response, attempted to develop a means of evaluation, of a return to legitimate judgment. Camus responded to exile; he sought to build a path home.

Rebellion as Diagnosis

Summarizing the thought of Plotinus, Camus remarked that "[w]hat we have here is similar to what we find in psychoanalysis: diagnosis coincides with treatment. To bring to light is to heal."[8] Given the influence of Plotinus on Camus, it is not surprising that this is also an apt description of Camus's political theory. Throughout his writings, fiction and nonfiction, diagnosis is intimately connected to his therapy.

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[7]Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower, (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 68.

[8]Albert Camus, "*Metaphysique chretiene et Neoplatonisme*," included in Joseph McBride, *Albert Camus: Philosopher and Literature*, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1992), p. 125.

For example, Camus's notion of revolt cannot be understood without first comprehending his analysis of the absurd. Rebellion is differentiated from revolution by the fact that the prior recognizes limits while the latter does not. Put simply, the absurd and revolt cannot be understood without recognizing Camus's use of *nemesis*. Indeed, upon close examination it becomes apparent that the interrelatedness of Camus's symbolizations is itself an attribute of his solution; proper diagnosis leads to a proper response which is restrained by a recognition of limits. Only by thoroughly exploring and criticizing *conditions* can authentic solutions emerge. To speak of kingdom without sufficiently analyzing exile results, in Brueggemann's words, in "cheap grace." *Diagnosis* is a key to Camus's political thought.

Comprehending Camus's political theory, then, hinges on recognizing the *interrelatedness of his various symbolizations*. Those scholars who focus on one theme or symbol at the expense of the other, fundamentally misconstrue his political thought. As has been noted, Camus's vision of what constitutes an authentic political community cannot be fathomed without understanding the unique characteristics of twentieth century exile.

Camus's explorations of exile, its effects on judgment, and disparate visions of kingdom occur in his fiction. More precisely, by means of his fictional characters, Camus diagnoses the experience of exile and the path home. And while Camus is sympathetic, to some degree, with each of his characters, it is clear that he judges some diagnoses of exile and visions of kingdom more legitimate than others. The progression from *The Stranger* to *The Plague*, from the individual to a community, clearly represents an evaluation; and the movement from isolation toward community is

at the core of Camus's social and political theory. But characters like Clamence--clearly bent on overcoming his isolation--demonstrate that intentions are not adequate. Despite Clamence's acute desire to escape exile, to overcome his subjectivism and achieve some form of community, in the end his solution, his kingdom, is unsatisfactory. This is because Clamence, just like the characters presented in *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*, *The Stranger*, and the first five stories in *Exile and the Kingdom*, fail to diagnose the surrounding conditions properly. By exposing how the desire to escape exile can lead to deformed and delusional expectations, Camus seeks to diagnose the dominant mood of the twentieth century. By exposing false diagnoses, he was paving the road for a more authentic understanding of contemporary exile and kingdom building.

Symbols as the Source of Limits

Another aspect of Camus's thought that requires reevaluation after his theory of symbols is considered is his notion of moderation or *la mesure*. Camus's conception of limits is generally regarded as the centerpiece of his political thought. After all, one of the distinguishing characteristics of rebellion, as opposed to revolution, is precisely a recognition of limits. Given this, the source of limits in Camus's thought has garnered considerable scholarly attention.

Most credit Camus's love of Greece and exaltation of nature as the primary source of his conception of limits; but, given Camus's marked differences from the ancient Greeks--his articulation of the absurd constitutes a very different understanding of nature--this interpretation is not persuasive. More recently, it has been argued that Camus's physical infirmities, especially his struggle with tuberculosis, were the source

of his conception of limits. Susan Tarrow argues that "[i]t was the human body that inspired Camus's idea on limits. The body can never go beyond what is essential to every human being, and Camus's theory of the Absurd is based upon his awareness of the gap between one's aspirations and one's physical limitations."[9] Although these interpretations are attractive and contain elements of truth, what has, again, been omitted is a consideration of Camus's theory of symbolization.

Camus's conception of inherent limitations stems from his thoughts on aesthetics in general and symbols in particular. Aware that in order for myths, symbols, and narratives to be compelling, to be representative, they must conform to inherent limitations, Camus developed the notion of *style*. Fulfilling a vital function--satisfying the human yearning for unity without lapsing into ideological or doctrinaire thinking--art must abide by limitations; for "if it [art] does not constrain itself, it indulges in ravings and becomes a slave to mere shadows."[10] Moreover, "[i]t is the same thing with creation as with civilization: it presumes an uninterrupted tension between form and matter, between evolution and the mind, and between history and values. If the equilibrium is destroyed, the result is dictatorship or anarchy, propaganda or formal insanity."[11] In other words, art and politics are bound by inherent limitations. Camus's

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[9]Susan Tarrow, *Exile from the Kingdom: A Political Rereading of Albert Camus*, (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1985), p. 5.

[10]Albert Camus, "Create Dangerously," *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage House, 1960), p. 268.

[11]Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage International, 1991), pp. 270-71

notion of style is particularly significant because it is, in actuality, an ontological criterion.

Yet Camus was not the only one to realize the importance of symbols for political theory. Eric Voegelin noted that

> [t]he self-illumination of society through symbols is an integral part of social reality, and one may even say its essential part, for through such symbolization the members of a society experience it as more than an accident or a convenience; they experience it as of their human essence. And, inversely, the symbols express the experience that man is fully man by virtue of his participation in a whole which transcends his particular existence.[12]

Although Camus might have been wary of some of Voegelin's language, he would agree that "social reality is not an object to be studied by the theorist merely externally. Each society, Voegelin suggests, possesses not only externality but also an internal dimension of meaningfulness through which the human beings who inhabit it interpret existence to themselves."[13] Therefore, if art or symbols are to fulfill a *political* function, if they are to be *representative* for a society, they must encompass and articulate both the internal and external dimensions of existence. This requisite is, in turn, why symbols are so significant. Although all works of art must conform to the ontological requirements of style, in order to represent both the internal and external dimensions of human existence, artists and philosophers must utilize symbols. Because of their unique linguistic attributes, symbols are vital for conveying the internal and

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[12]Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 1.

[13]Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1981), p. 93.

external aspects of human existence. And, just as any other creative activity, symbolizations must be bound by limitations. Camus recognized this and remarked,

> [l]ike the greatest artists, Melville constructed his symbols out of concrete things, not from the material of dreams. The creator of myths partakes of genius only insofar as he inscribes these myths in the denseness of reality and not in the fleeting clouds of the imagination. In Kafka, the reality that he describes is created by the symbol, the fact stems from the image, whereas in Melville the symbol emerges from reality, the image is born of what is seen.[14]

Because reinvigoration is such a highly personal process, requiring artists to interpret symbols in light of both their personal and generational experiences, it is clear that Camus *experienced* limits when he reinvigorated symbols. After all, Camus wrote novels not simply for aesthetic purposes, but for the sake of kingdom building. Understanding that political symbols must conform to specific ontological characteristics--representing the experience of human identity as both individual as well as collective--the connection between symbols and limits becomes clear. When both the significance of art and the role of symbols in Camus's thought are revealed, the most likely source of Camus's conception of limits or *nemesis* emerges: his engagement with symbolic reality.

This grounding of Camus's notion of limits in symbols is significant. Not only is this explanation more convincing, it offers a more stable foundation to his theory of limits. Camus did not simply posit limits. He did not discover limits when trying to write novels that would appeal to the general public. Rather, Camus discovered limits when he explicitly attempted to write novels and stories that would both explore and

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[14]Albert Camus, "Herman Melville," *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 141.

ameliorate the contemporary condition. Moreover, Camus attempted to construct a series of symbolic works that paved the way for a more authentic conception of politics. Convinced that contemporary experience was beleaguered by a pervasive sense of isolation, Camus tried to generate symbols that elucidate our common bonds. Given this motivation, he had to be especially sensitive to the ontological requirements of myth-making and symbolization.

Human Nature, Divided Existence, and Symbols

Yet another benefit of recognizing the significance of symbols within Camus's political thought is that it reinforces and clarifies his philosophic anthropology. As mentioned, Camus's view of human nature is one of the topics most explored by scholars. Despite the degree of attention, a satisfactory understanding has not been achieved. The difficulty arises because Camus makes several seemingly contradictory remarks on the subject. In *The Rebel*, Camus states: "Analysis of rebellion leads at least to the suspicion that, contrary to the postulates of contemporary thought, a human nature does exist, as the Greeks believed."[15] And while it is clear that Camus thought that rebellion was an attribute of human nature, nowhere does he definitively discuss or define human nature. This issue is made even more complicated by his various comments that either deny the existence of, or, at the very least, deny the possibility of knowing, fundamental reality. After all, Camus never repudiated the existence of the absurd. He always maintained that certain things were simply beyond human understanding.

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[15]Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 16.

Many commentators simply ignore the inconsistencies and use the portions of Camus's thought that fit their agenda. But even the most earnest scholars have difficulty. One of the best investigations of Camus's theory of human nature to date, Fred Willhoite's *Beyond Nihilism: Albert Camus's Contribution to Political Thought*, properly identifies the problem but falls short of offering a coherent resolution. Willhoite notes that, "Camus never wrote a treatise on human nature, but in a real sense he wrote almost nothing except observations and commentary on the nature of man. We know from his explicit remark in *The Rebel* that he did believe in the reality of a common, enduring human nature, but, as an existential thinker, he was most reluctant to characterize it by a series of abstract descriptive terms."[16] Vague references to existentialism do not resolve the issue of what constitutes human nature for Camus.

It is instructive to note that Willhoite turns to Camus's use of various *symbols* when examining his view of human nature. Primarily, Willhoite scrutinizes Camus's use of the bubonic plague as a symbol for examining the existence of evil in general and human evil in particular. Yet despite Willhoite's acumen--he accurately acknowledges that in the end "[w]hether man's nature is in an ultimate sense innately good or evil, or, more precisely, what is the primal cause of human evil, was for Camus an unanswerable question"--he fails to grasp the importance of symbols in Camus's thought.[17] The reason Camus utilized symbols to explore human nature is precisely because of their unique attributes. Symbols enumerate paradoxes; they say both "yes"

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[16]Fred Willhoite, Jr. *Beyond Nihilism: Albert Camus's Contribution to Political Thought*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), p. ix.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 96.

and "no." The fact that symbols have the potential of representing paradoxes without claiming to resolve ambiguity, explains Camus's position. Because human nature is inherently paradoxical--"[t]here is in the human condition . . . a basic absurdity as well as an implacable nobility"--and because they perpetually oscillate "between the natural and the extraordinary, the individual and the universal, the tragic and the everyday, the absurd and the logical,"[18] symbols are the most appropriate means of communicating "the divided existence that we represent."[19] Avoiding the extremes of all or nothing modes of thinking and representation, symbols elucidate human nature without lapsing into doctrinaire propositions. This is significant because while there are certain characteristics of human existence that are common enough to declare that there is a "human nature," it can never be delineated in a precise or complete fashion. In other words, symbols allow Camus to argue for the existence of human nature on the one hand without reducing human existence to a series of narrow and formal definitions. Inherently paradoxical, human nature is both bound and free.

Position, Pathos, and Communication

An analysis of Camus's symbolic treatment of exile, judgment, and kingdom reveals that what distinguishes authentic visions of exile and kingdom from illegitimate ones is the position, with regards to knowledge and judgment, the characters assume. As previously discussed, at the end of *The Stranger*, Meursault abandons his indifference and assumes the stance of judge. Frustrated by prosecuting attorneys,

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[18]Albert Camus, "Hope and the Absurd in the Works of Franz Kafka," *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 127.

[19]Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 251.

magistrates, judges, and priests, all of whom claim to possess knowledge that is clearly beyond human capacity, Meursault finally explodes with emotion and anger. Afterwards, he presents his vision of kingdom: "For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate."[20] No longer the indifferent anti-hero wronged by a blind and illegitimate legal system, Meursault assumes the role of judge, jury, and executioner. He condemns all of society for condemning, for misunderstanding, him. Meursault's is a bitter, hateful, response to exile. Society never understands Meursault, and he never comprehends society. Without authentic communication, no viable community is possible. The same is true of Clamence. Poised in Amsterdam and ready to pounce on unsuspecting visitors, Clamence is not sincere about achieving community. Clamence seeks accomplices. Believing everyone, including himself, to be forever and inexcusably guilty, he perpetually judges others before they judge him. Attempting to ascend to the position of ultimate arbiter, Clamence claims too much; he tries to rise above the crowd, to distance himself from others.

Camus's more positive works present characters, such as Rieux and D'Arrast, who never claim the awesome power of ultimate judgment. While Rieux and D'Arrast do not embrace Paneloux's Christianity or the native rituals of the *macoumba*, they are not dismissive. Rather, their solution is to engage, to participate, in the struggle against human suffering.

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[20]Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Matthew Ward (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 123.

Pathos is crucial to Camus's political theory and to his reinvigoration. In order for symbols to have resonance, in order for symbols to become representative for individual and collective identity, symbols must be in solidarity with the pathos of human existence. In other words, symbols must always be grounded in human experience stripped to its essentials, namely, "naked suffering, common to all, intermingling its roots with those of a stubborn hope."[21] For Camus, an essential differentiating characteristic between legitimate and illegitimate symbolizations of kingdom is the position taken with regard to suffering. Once Camus's position on suffering is properly seen as a delineating criterion between visions of kingdom, the differences between Clamence and D'Arrast become sharper. Clamence strives to reduce *his* suffering while neglecting others. D'Arrast differs. By bearing the stone for the cook, D'Arrast becomes actively involved in the struggle against human suffering in general. Through his actions D'Arrast not only assists the cook, he *shares* in the suffering and struggle. This level of participation, this sharing in the pathos of others, allows a deeper form of communication. As Voegelin writes,

> [t]he community of pathos is the basis of communication. Behind the hardened, intellectually supported attitudes which separate men, lie the *pathemata* which bind them together. However false and grotesque the intellectual position may be, the pathos at the core has the truth of an immediate experience. If one can penetrate to this core and reawaken in a man the awareness of his *conditio humana*, communication in the existential sense becomes possible.[22]

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[21]Albert Camus, "The Wager of Our Generation," *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 240.

[22]Eric Voegelin, *Order and History: Plato and Aristotle*, vol. III (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1957), pp. 29-30.

The importance of communication within Camus's political thought has not been completely overlooked by scholars. Three of the best treatments of Camus's political thought, Willhoite's *Beyond Nihilism*, Sprintzen's *Camus: A Critical Examination*, and Jeffrey Isaac's *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion* conclude, although by very different means, that the strongest aspect of Camus's political theory is his call for dialogic communication. While all three thinkers understand dialogue to mean more than simple communication--Willhoite sees Camus's call as analogous to Martin Buber's "I-Thou" relationship, Sprintzen casts it as a rejoinder to the contemporary quandary between absolutism and relativism, and Isaac compares it to Arendt's representational thinking--no one properly integrates Camus's understanding of pathos to his position on authentic communication. Human suffering is not only a common feature of human nature for Camus, it is also one basis for authentic existential communication. For Camus, pathos is a path to community.

Final Reprise

An examination of Camus's reinvigoration of exile, judgment, and kingdom reveals several key aspects of his political theory. First, diagnosis is vital to authentic social and political communities. For Camus, this meant the recognition and analysis of contemporary sensibilities. After examining his personal and generational experiences, and carefully exploring the roots and character of modern rebellion, Camus believed that contemporary existence was plagued by an historically unique form of exile. He was not alone. In her highly regarded analysis, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt observed that "terror can rule absolutely only over men who are isolated against each other and that, therefore, one of the primary concerns of all tyrannical government

is to bring this isolation about."[23] But isolation is not brought about by totalitarianism only. Arendt observed that

> [l]oneliness, the common ground for terror, the essence of totalitarian government, and for ideology or logicality, the preparation of its executioners and victims, is closely connected with uprootedness and superfluousness which have been the curse of modern masses since the beginning of the industrial revolution and which have become acute with the rise of imperialism at the end of the last century and the break-down of political institutions and social traditions in our own time.[24]

Loneliness is more than simple isolation; it is a psychological and spiritual state. Differentiating solitude from loneliness, Arendt noted that "[s]olitary men have always been in danger of loneliness, when they can no longer find the redeeming grace of companionship to save them from the duality and equivocality and doubt." But while the danger of loneliness has always lurked, something changed in the nineteenth century. The experience of loneliness, of exile, became pervasive. This is significant because, according to Arendt, "[w]hat prepares men for totalitarian domination in the non-totalitarian world is the fact that loneliness, once a borderline experience usually suffered in certain marginal social conditions like old age, has become an everyday experience of the ever growing masses of our century.[25] Exile is not only the experience of contemporary existence, it is also the groundwork for future totalitarian regimes. In short, if Camus and Arendt are correct and exile continues to be the

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[23]Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1951), p. 472.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 475.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 478.

prevailing experience, then the age of ideology is not over and the threat of totalitarianism endures.

Second, while Camus's political theory is tentative--he does not extend his analysis to the creation of political institutions or even ideal regimes--he does provide a philosophically astute means of evaluating movements and regimes. For Camus, there are certain epistemological and ontological criteria that cannot be violated. If a movement or philosophy claims to have access to certain types of knowledge--the character of someone else's soul, for example--Camus deems that movement invalid. Truth claims that go beyond human capacity are the first sign of illegitimacy.

Philosophically, the most important aspect of Camus's understanding and use of symbols is that it adds new and more profound dimensions to his thought. No longer is it possible to dismiss Camus as simply a committed intellectual, one who fought bravely, albeit somewhat agonizingly, to defend poorly defined moralistic positions. Camus's theory of symbolization locates him in a larger movement. Isaac broadly identifies it as "anti-foundational thinking," while I have situated Camus within a smaller category of thinkers who embraced art and symbols, but the implication is the same.[26] Camus is relevant to contemporary political theory. Centrally concerned with problems of mediation and language, Camus attempted to justify human action without appealing to a transcendent ground. Camus struggled to establish, in Isaac's words, "foundations without foundationalism." This dissertation argues that Camus's theory of symbolization is fundamental to his project. By actively engaging symbolic reality,

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[26]See in particular Jeffrey Isaac, *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 2 - 12 and pp. 106 -110.

by attempting to reinvigorate myths and symbols in order to make them socially and politically relevant, Camus discovered ontological criteria. Aside from resolving several persistent controversies within Camus's thought, such as whether he was an existentialist or an essentialist, this "grounding" of Camus's sense of limits provides a more stable base for judgment.[27] Myths and symbols were the source of Camus's strength.

As mentioned, Camus was not alone in his return to myths, symbols, and narrative. According to philosophers such as Ernst Cassirer, Eric Voegelin, and Paul Ricoeur, symbols perform certain unique functions. For all three, symbols are a response to the persistent problems associated with metaphysics. Indeed, in the works of Voegelin and Ricoeur in particular, symbols serve as a rejoinder to the postmodern critique, especially with regard to the problems associated with mediation and language. Although it would be too much to contend that Albert Camus foresaw the postmodern critique or completely comprehended the potential symbols have to reduce or ameliorate problems of mediation and language, it is significant that Camus not only consciously developed a theory of symbolization but also wrote highly symbolic narratives. Once his theory of symbolization has been culled from his various works, it becomes clear that Camus explicitly engaged symbols in an effort to reinvigorate the symbolic horizon. "Myths have no life of their own. They wait for us to give them flesh. If one man in the world answers their call, they give us their strength in all its

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[27]It is important to remember that terms such as "ground" are not intended to refer to a metaphysical or divine ground. The process of symbolization itself reveals that there is no such thing as a stable ground upon which to base, unequivocally, morality or politics.

fullness. We must preserve this myth, and ensure that its slumber is not mortal so that its resurrection is possible."[28] Aware of problems with language, mediation, and representation, Camus turned to symbols.[29] In short, Camus purposefully engaged symbols in his narratives in an effort to revive civilization and politics.

Given this ambition, a most significant feature of symbols is their dynamism. Cassirer identified this attribute as *symbolic pregnance*, Voegelin called it *reinvigoration*, and Riceour referred to symbols as *food for thought*; but all three agreed that symbols perform a productive function. Camus's various references to the *fecundity* of symbols demonstrates that he too was aware of this characteristic of symbols. "A symbol is always general in character and, however precise its translation, an artist can only restore to it only its movement. . . . A symbol always transcends the one who makes use of it and makes him say in reality more than he is aware of expressing."[30] Fecundity is important because it allows for a "double possibility of interpretation"; and this, in turn, makes symbols resistant to dogmatic reduction. Unlike propositional metaphysics and most rationalist philosophies, it is very difficult to claim a single and absolute interpretation of a symbol. By their very lexicon, by the very processes by which they operate, symbols are resistant to absolute truth claims.

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[28]Albert Camus, "Prometheus in the Underworld," *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 141.

[29]See in particular Camus's comments "On a Philosophy of Expression *by Brice Parain*, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 228-241.

[30]Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 124.

For someone like Camus, who witnessed the terror of leftist and rightist ideological regimes, this is a crucial advantage.

Although resistant, symbols are not immune from doctrinaire interpretations. In fact, the source of their strength, the very ambiguity that allows them to be fecund, also poses an enormous danger. The inability to define or refute a symbol entirely can be a source of obfuscation. For example, from "blood and soil" to race theories, the Nazis used a myriad of symbols and myths to sway the German people. A witness to such mystification, Camus was aware of the dangers associated with symbols. He realized that simply using myths and symbols would not eliminate the problems of dogmatism or ideological thinking. He was not alone.[31] Scholars such as Voegelin argue that over time and through prolonged use, the meaning of all symbols is often lost or denigraded. As the experience that engendered a symbol fades into the past, the meaning of a symbol becomes dogmatic and it loses its resonance, its meaning. In order to avoid such ossification, symbols must be continually rejuvenated. This is why the fecundity of symbols is so significant. Because of the unique ability of symbols to refer beyond themselves, symbols are creative or, more accurately, re-creative. This process of returning to worn or rigidified symbols and reviving their relevance is called reinvigoration; and this is precisely what Albert Camus attempts to do in his fictional works. Camus did not choose symbols arbitrarily nor did he use symbols solely for emotional affect. Camus engaged and reinvigorated the experience-symbolizations he

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[31]For a brief but linguistically sophisticated discussion of the dangers of interpreting myths see in particular Paul Ricoeur, "Myth as Bearer of Possible Worlds," ed. Mario J. Valdes, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 483-490.

believed to be most representative for contemporary experience. Believing contemporary existence to be in a state of extreme isolation and alienation, Camus selected the symbols exile, judgment, and kingdom in an effort to understand and relieve contemporary angst. Yet, while the Greek or Judeo-Christian experience of exile is pertinent, twentieth century exile differs in degree and kind. Thus, in order for Camus's symbols to resonate, he had to recast the meaning of exile, judgment, and kingdom. Camus's symbols had to speak to contemporary experience. For the process of reinvigoration not only calls for penetrating a symbol to original experience, but also *existentially* engaging the symbol. In short, Camus poured his personal and generational experiences into the symbols exile, judgment, and kingdom. Not simply a symbolic novelist, Camus was a writer consciously engaged in the process of reinvigoration.

With respect to political judgment, the most significant contribution of Camus's use and understanding of symbols deals with the question of style or ontological criteria for evaluation. Camus argued that one of the most detrimental aspects of modernity was that an inflated faith in rationality eventually resulted in an embrace of nihilism. Motivated by a belief that human rationality can achieve unity and discover every facet of existence, when this fails, and it surely will, humans conclude that nothing can be known. Inflated faith in the powers of human rationality ultimately lead to an embrace of nihilism. Camus's critique of reason is not especially unique or profound; many scholars have made similar appraisals. Yet, once Camus's notion of limits is understood to be derived from his treatment of symbols and symbolic reality, his epistemological critique gains depth. In short, Camus's epistemological conclusions lead to ontological

observations. Despite human aspirations, there is no Archimedean point. Human knowledge and meaning is inevitably connected to the flux of existence. Camus argues that tying knowledge to existence does not make knowledge completely contingent. The traditional desire to extract knowledge from the inconsistencies, the vulgarities of the material world, are further influences of the all or nothing movement within philosophy. According to Camus, an understanding of art and symbols reveals the failings of traditional philosophic logic. Just because there is no unequivocal interpretation of a work of art or symbol, does not mean that the creative process is arbitrary. Inherent limitations bind the creative and the political, as well as the epistemological dimensions of human existence. The way to avoid nihilism, then, is to alter human expectations. For Camus, the best way to alter human expectations is by engaging the artistic and symbolic aspects of human existence. In short, art has the potential to guide epistemological expectations by revealing the inherent existence of limits.

Camus seeks to illustrate the ontological elements of human knowledge and judgment by emphasizing the *position* taken by his various characters. It is significant that in every illegitimate vision of exile and kingdom the character aspires to remove him or herself from ordinary restraints or standards. Clamence's vision is the most illustrative as he seeks to rise above the din of ordinary judgments and become, once and for all, the judge. He freely admits,

> [t]hen I grow taller, *tres cher*, I grow taller, I breathe freely, I am on the mountain, the plain stretches before my eyes. How intoxicating to feel like God the Father and to hand out definitive testimonials of bad character and habits. I sit enthroned among my bad angels at the summit of the Dutch heaven and I watch ascending toward me, as they issue from the fogs and the water, the multitude of the Last Judgment. They

> rise slowly; I already see the first of them arriving. On his bewildered face, half hidden by his hand, I read the melancholy of the common condition and the despair of not being able to escape it. And as for me, I pity without absolving, I understand without forgiving, and above all, I feel at last that I am being adored![32]

Likewise, Meursault judges all of society; he pits his judgment against everyone else. Never seeking to become part of the community, Meursault initially adopts an attitude of indifference. But at the end of the novel, Meursault reveals his heart. He is not indifferent; he hates. He feels disdain for society and finds solace in judging. Much like those who claimed the power of knowing his soul, Meursault also judges completely. In the end, Meursault claims too privileged a position.

By emphasizing that these characters seek to rise above others, Camus attempts to demonstrate that epistemology is intimately connected to position, to ontology. Despite all his efforts, Clamence cannot rise above the others. He is not God and has no right to judge as if he is. In other words, because he misunderstands his ontological position, and believing himself capable of rising above the process, above everyone else, Clamence is lead to illegitimate diagnoses and solutions. This understanding of epistemology, as being dependent on a proper understanding of human participation, is shared by many scholars. Voegelin evaluates symbolizations with a similar ontological criterion. For Voegelin, human existence must be symbolized as tensional, as existing within the *metaxy* or In-Between. Moreover, the tensionality of existence extends to all aspects of experience. Indeed, the traditional dichotomies within philosophy: being and becoming, idealism and materialism, good and evil, are best understood, best

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[32]Albert Camus, *The Fall*, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 143.

represented, not as mutually exclusive but rather as tensionally related. Existence is not characterized by one pole or another but by tensional relationships. Any symbolization that violates this fundamental characteristic of reality, any symbol that focuses on one pole of reality to the exclusion of all else, is an inauthentic representation of existence. While it is too much to suggest that Camus's understanding of epistemology and ontology was as sophisticated as Voegelin's, it is clear that Camus took care throughout his works to situate humans properly within the *metaxy*. Just as his art consciously melds formalism and realism, Camus's political theory integrates human understanding to human existence. Clearly, Camus's symbolizations conform to Voegelin's ontological criterion. Camus's symbols portray human experience as tensional.

Scholars such as the aforementioned Isaac, praise Camus's efforts to ground human action without appealing to metaphysics or transcendentals. More traditional thinkers, however, bemoan any attempt to deviate from essentialism. These scholars would be very concerned with the character of Camus's symbolizations. For although Camus relies on both Greek and Judeo-Christian sources for the symbols he utilized, his vision of exile and kingdom clearly differs. What is lost and what is gained in Camus's treatment? The most significant difference is that unlike Plotinus or Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah, Camus's symbols do not express a faith in a divinely ordered cosmos. The holiness that inspired both fear and wonder in Ezekiel is replaced by the absurd. Plotinus's faith that true unity could and would be achieved through the human soul is missing as well. For Camus, true unity is not possible. The most that can be achieved are brief, penultimate experiences of unity. Such transitory visions of unity, achieved in a variety of ways--the natural world, art in general and novels in particular,

and symbols--are important; indeed, they are what instills hope and strength into the human struggle.

There is no doubt that Camus's symbolizations of exile and kingdom are considerably more ambiguous toward the divine. For someone like Voegelin, the sort of transcendence that is achieved in Camus's symbolizations is promising, but far from attaining the level of clarity of previous symbolizations of order. Illustrative of this is the fact that although Camus represents human existence as tensional in nature, his symbolizations would not be sufficient for someone like Voegelin. Voegelin insists that every self-reflecting soul discover the existence of a divine pull, a divine spark that orients the human psyche and gives direction, guidance, and grounding to philosophic, artistic, and political inquiries. This is absent in Camus's works. Camus's comments on art--and its frivolity--demonstrate both his continued acceptance of the absurd as well as the absence of the sort of divine guidance Voegelin demands. Was there a divine transcendence that existed in the beyond yet penetrated the psyches of humans and oriented philosophy, art, and politics? For Camus, this is precisely the sort of knowledge that lies outside the realm of human knowledge. For Camus, the symbol of the beyond continued to be absurd.

Nevertheless, Voegelin admired Camus's efforts. He praised Camus's recognition of the power of myth and symbol. Bemoaning the social sciences because they target "second realities," Voegelin valued artistic works in general and Camus's in particular. Given the philosophical errors that dominate much of political science, Camus use of symbols and myth is evidence, at least for Voegelin, of the beginning of a return to more authentic social and political inquiries.

The more traditional criticisms of Camus's political theory--that it is too ambiguous, that is does not allow for adequate judgment and action--are easier to confront. Although it is true that the criteria Camus uses to evaluate symbols would not assist in determining which institutions are appropriate for this or that regime, his analysis does allow for a thorough evaluation of the social, cultural, and ethical foundations of political thought and action. Given the hubristic claims of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this is a powerful tool.

Ultimately, the key to Camus's political thought, as developed in his political symbolizations, is his call for authentic communication. Central to communication is the position one assumes toward human suffering. Whether sponsored by religious or political movements, Camus refuses to sanction suffering today for salvation tommorow. For Camus, human action is not only possible, it is required. Remembering human limitations, yet joining together in a struggle against injustice, communities can be formed. The ancient Greeks knew much about the power of pathos and community. Near the end of *The Iliad*, Homer describes Priam's effort to retrieve the body of his dead son, Hector, from the inflexible and unyielding Achilles. Reminding Achilles of his own loss, of the death of his father, Priam persuades Achilles; he communicates.

> So he spoke, and stirred in the other a passion of grieving for his own father. He took the old man's hand and pushed him gently away, and the two remembered, as Priam sat huddled at the feet of Achilleus and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor and Achilleus wept now for his own father, now again for Patroklos.[33]

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[33]Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 488.

An old lesson, but clearly one that is too easily forgotten. Like Priam, Camus attempts to reawaken humans to the communicative power of pathos by evoking the symbols of exile, judgment, and kingdom. In more mythic terms, the ancient Greek hero who sacrificed everything for the benefit of humankind, Sisyphus, is recast by D'Arrast. A civil engineer haphazardly thrown into a melange of culture and change, D'Arrast shares the burden. Participating in a way that preserves his individuality yet reduces the suffering of others, D'Arrast *is* a modern Sisyphus struggling for justice. For Camus, such struggles are the beginning of the path home; and home is the only place authentic politics can be pursued.

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DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Peter A. Petrakis

Major Field: Political Science

Title of Dissertation: Albert Camus's Reconstruction of Symbolic Reality: Exile, Judgment, and Kingdom

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

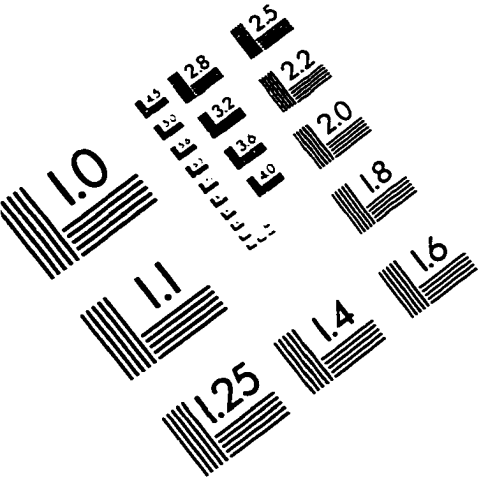
Dean of the Graduate School

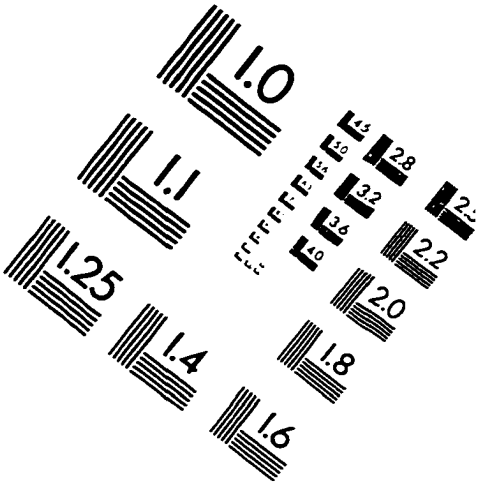
EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

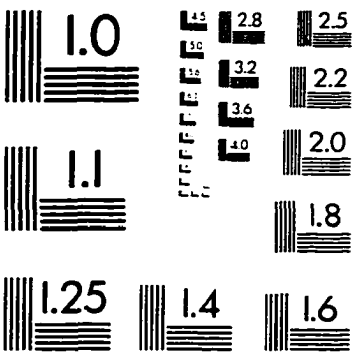
Date of Examination:

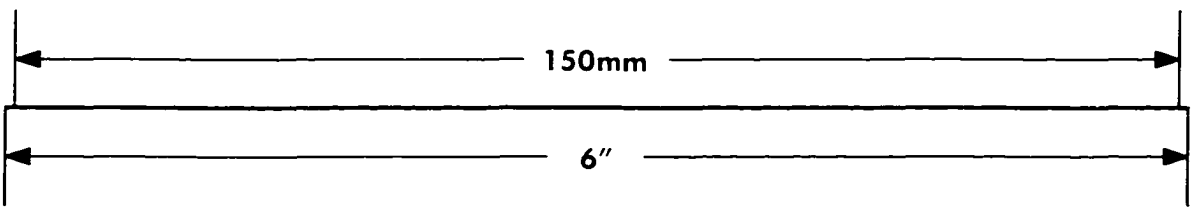
March 12, 1998

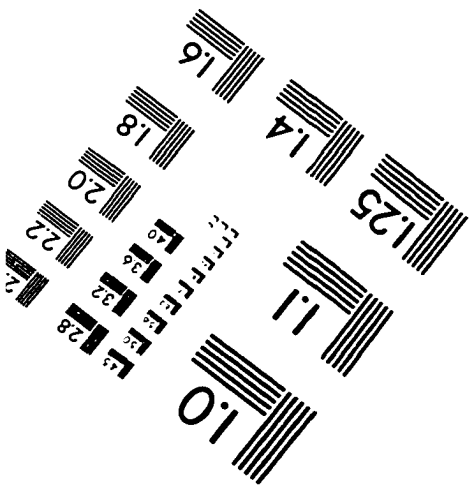
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)











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